

Queens Grace

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Queens Grace

by [RenneMichaels](#)

Summary

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. **COMPLETE** Sequel Anthony of Asgard

Just a heads up, the final sequel, Stark InterGalactic is currently posting.

[Stark InterGalactic Link](#)

Notes

Memory Loss Midgard Loki thingy has been done before, and done well I might add. But I wanted to see where I could go with it since I was taking a break from my Desperate Measures series until Loki 2 Dark World to come out. Who knew it was going to take on a

life of its own and refuse to end? This is what I get for not wanting my Desperate series to go all AU on me.

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The calm before the storm?

Chapter Summary

Tony gets out of town company. Really, really far out of town company.

Chapter Notes



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Chapter # 1 – The calm before the storm?

It had started off as such a nice evening. Well, perhaps nice is not quite the right word for Tony Stark being forced to grace a charity function with his presence, especially when it wasn't even a Stark International function. Okay, his evening thus far had sucked. A charity cause he could care less about, boring people and bad booze. But hey, when compared to a surprise visit by the Asgardian Royal family he'd been having a wonderful time.

OoooO

Distinctive ring tones are a god send, Tony thought as he silenced his phone without even looking at it. While Jarvis had several ring tones of his own, the one that Tony had just received from him was not one of his emergency ones.

Replacing the phone in his pocket; Tony smoothed down the jacket of his new David August suit. The fine black material was so rich it almost glowed. Just as he was adjusting his crisp white cuffs in preparation to get back to some serious smarming, his phone rang again.

Jarvis.

Again.

Same ignorable ring tone. Tony smiled at the blonde in front of him, with perhaps just a bit more teeth than he normally showed as he again silenced his phone.

“So Marilyn—”

“Maria,” said those luscious apricot glazed lips, with just the tiniest hint of tightening in irritation for Tony, again not using the woman's correct name. Her blonde hair, natural for a wonder, rippled as she tossed it back with one hand, not accidently shifting and highlighting some impressive parts of her anatomy. Then her big brown eyes deliberately softened as she tried to regain the mood that had originally captured the billionaire's interest.

Said billionaire, didn't really want to be here. Charity events were Pepper's gigs not his. But if Tony has to attend boring charity functions, complete with bad booze, he at least wants to be left alone during this one bright spot in his evening. Melissa, or Maria has a rocking body that her thin champagne sheath dress shows it off to perfection. As if she didn't know it.

And standing in front of this display of a proposed research new wing, with the various lights washing down from all different directions... Let us just say that her pale thin dress was not leaving anything to the engineer's imagination. Which is quite the accomplishment, since Tony has a really good imagination and can imagine quite a lot. He mentally sent kudos to the maintenance and lighting crews for making Martha's dress almost disappear.

"So Mister Stark--" Maria purred.

"Tony. Please, call me Tony."

Maria swept her lashes down, before peering up mischievously from underneath them, "All right then... Tony--"

It was contrived of course, but hey, he could still admire it couldn't he? He was just leaning in to catch whatever that dark sultry voice was going to say next, when his phone went off for the third time. This time it was one of Jarvis' message tones.

For something that was not on the emergency notification list, his AI was being pretty fucking annoying this evening. Showing still more teeth, Tony gritted out, "One moment." As he quickly dug his phone out of his pocket and shut the damn thing off.

"Now, where were we," he asked emptying his glass and handing it off to a passing server. Tony knew he might need both hands pretty soon, so it paid to think ahead.

He and Monica had just reset their positions, him interested and appreciative of the view, her breathlessly excited to be within ten feet of an unmarried billionaire and were preparing to move on to the next step of the dance when he heard his name being called.

Tony groaned to himself.

Pepper, calling his name was striding towards them as fast as her tight fishtail gown allowed.

"Tony! There you are, thank goodness I found you," she said handing him her phone. "Jarvis really needs to talk to you, he said it's important."

While Tony normally would have appreciated how well Pepper's royal blue, off the shoulder gown matched her eyes, right now it only drew his attention to the fact that those narrowed blue eyes were fastened on the hand that was stroking Tony's arm.

Rolling his eyes, Tony slipped away from the blonde fondling his arm and took the phone off of Pepper.

I swear I am going to update Jarvis' protocols before the week is out, he thought savagely.

"Excuse me ladies," he said with a charming if false smile as he slipped away and headed towards the hallway.

"Well that was fucking awkward," Tony muttered to himself, walking another few yards before he leaned disgustedly against the wall.

“Jarvis, I swear I’m going to donate you to a public library. Why in the hell are you bothering me?”

“I’m sorry sir, but you really need to return to the tower immediately. It’s an emergency.”

“Well it can’t be a break-in, fire, explosion or theft. You have a different number and ring tone to report real emergencies don’t you?” He said testily.

Not that Tony thinks that the explosion thing is going to happen ever again. He now makes sure to turn everything before he leaves the lab. He also now has a standing rule for Jarvis to double check and notify him if he forgets.

The blonde chick, Marcia? Maria? Whatever the hell her name was, stepped out into the hall pouting. She threw a furious glare his way before she spun on her heel and stomped off in the other direction. As aggravated as Tony was about caught being ‘more than polite’ with Blondie, he can’t help but allow a smirk to tug at one corner of his mouth. Most women wearing heels that high can’t stomp. And Tony is pretty sure that if Blondie knew how it made her ass ripple, she wouldn’t be doing it either.

“No Sir, you have company at the tower.” Jarvis informed him, recalling his attention.

“Seriously Jarvis? That does not have an emergency tone... Because why? Work with me here ... Because it’s not a fucking emergency. I’m busy being a good little corporate drone to make Pepper happy, which your insistence on talking to me didn’t help by the way.”

“I do apologize sir, but this--”

“Did I forget to meet someone tonight?”

“No sir--”

“Well then just then tell them to make an appointment and come back another day. I’m busy trying not to piss Pepper off any more than I just did.” Since blonde chick was gone, Tony eased back towards the door leading to the event, looking for Pepper.

Pepper was not hard to find, her hair, dress and height made sure of that. She was currently waving her hand, directing the attention of an older couple to something on a nearby table. As the couple looked towards the table display, she glanced up at Tony.

Damn.

Tony could see the fury that Pepper was feeling as she looked at him for the briefest moment. But worse she had to bottle her temper up, that was never, in his experience, a good thing. As mad as Pepper was, by the time the couple turned back towards her she was once again wearing her smiling corporate face.

Okay. Now Tony was really pissed.

“Oh, and Jarvis, just for the record, I lost all my good boy points for even coming to this damn event because you made Pepper come find me for this stupid call. So I am not happy with you.”

“Again sir, I apologize. However Thor Odinson, his mother Queen Frigga, Loki Odinson, a few guards and several other Asgardians are on the penthouse terrace. The queen would like to talk to you immediately.”

Tony’s head reared back; totally pushing the ‘Pepper Incident’ out of his mind he gave the phone a

confused look.

Okaaaay.

That's weird.

Thor he could maybe see coming to visit him. But Thor's mother? And Loki?

What the hell?

A little day trip by the Asgard First Family? Complete with the psychotic war criminal little brother? Accompanied by a gaggle of Space Viking hangers-on? "So they want to talk to the Avengers and SHIELD right?"

"No sir. I did offer to call SHIELD, but the queen was most emphatic that she wished to speak to you and you alone. You personally sir, not as an Avenger." Jarvis told him, dashing any hopes that Tony was going to be able to have someone else take the lead on whatever shit storm was about to occur.

Tony sighed, scrubbing a hand across his face before running his fingers distractedly through his hair.

"Crap Jarvis, this is going to be bad, I just know it." Rubbing his neck tiredly, he briefly considered pretending this call had never happened, hanging up Pepper's phone and taking the damn battery out so Jarvis couldn't call her back.

Why me?

"Damn.

Alright Jarvis, let them into the living room, make 'em comfortable and tell them I'll be there in about twenty minutes."

"Very good sir, I shall do so immediately. I will also direct Dummy to bring up a gurney from the medical wing so the younger Mister Odinson does not bleed on your couch.

"What?!"

Okay... he thought, this is going to be real ugly. Of course anytime alien space Vikings, my couch and blood are concerned it couldn't help but be... So yeah. Real ugly.

Tony shook his head, "You know what? I don't want to know, I'll be right there. Call Happy and have him meet me at the front door, he can come back and get Pepper later."

He walked over towards the group that his CEO was talking to.

"Oh and Jarvis? You get to explain it to Pepper," Tony said loud enough for her to hear as he handed her back her phone.

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment

kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Home again, home again

Chapter Summary

Frigga explains the plan, Tony is less than thrilled and wants no parts of it. Tony learns that Einherjars are really big scary dudes with really long swords.

Chapter Notes

Odin has taken Loki's magic and made him mortal. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Odin then decides to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory of recent events going back the last four years. Recent events leading up to this decision make Frigga decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station, but that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 82,000 words so far.

Chapter 2 – Home again, home again

Tony stripped off his suit coat and tie as he exited the elevator and walked through the waiting area leading to the penthouse level. During the ride back to his tower he had taken the opportunity to calm his nerves with some good scotch. Fortunately the ride was just long enough to allow it to kick in.

“So, Jarvis... anything happening that I need to know about in there?” he asked as he tossed his clothes over a chair right inside the front hall of his apartment. He could just hear the faintest traces of conversation from the main living room.

“Well sir, from what they are saying, the younger Mister Odinson is pretty badly injured.” Jarvis told him quietly.

“Why are they here though? Have they said?” Tony asked as he laid his sunglasses on a table and smoothed down his ruffled brown hair in the hall mirror hanging above it.

“Yes sir, apparently Odin Allfath--”

“Friend Stark!” boomed Thor walking into the hall and clapping both his hands on Tony's shoulders.

“Whoa! Point Break, easy there. No dislocated bones please.” Tony said as he tried unsuccessfully to slide out from the thunder god's hands.

While Tony was not the most observant of people when he was drinking, even he could see that the god looked tired. He had shadows under his eyes and didn't look like he had slept in a month.

“Hey buddy, what's going on? Why are you guys all here? Please don't tell me there is a detour on the astral highway that passes my tower.” Tony asked hiding a wince as Thor tightened his grip in

what only a god would consider a comforting manner.

Glancing down at Thor's outfit he asked, "What's with the all the blood?"

Oh crap. Who in the hell even knew that Thor had a 'kicked puppy' face.

"Hey! Sparky. Come on buddy, buck up okay? You look like someone just stole your woobie." Thor looked slightly puzzled as Tony's security blanket joke flew over his head. But then he just slumped a bit, running a hand through his messy blonde locks in exasperation.

"Come Man of Iron, my mother wishes to speak to you on a matter of utmost importance," Thor said sadly as his other hand slid down to Tony's bicep and the god proceeded to tug him towards the living room.

Okay then.

Tony was not surprised when he entered his living room, after all Jarvis had told him that Thor and the queen were traveling with an entourage. However, he was perhaps dismayed at the makeup and general demeanor of the large group of people in his home. Not a one of them looked happy. Hell, not a one of them looked anything but downright pissed.

Look at the size of those freaking swords, the person holding a sword that large becomes a bit of back ground noise really, he mused.

Not that the four guys standing in his living room could even fade into the background if they wanted to. First is would be impossible to overlook those huge hunks of shiny metal strapped to them. The guards were all at least as tall as Thor and almost as muscled. Couple that with the Lord of the Rings armor, huge glittering spear, two foot freaking tall ceremonial helm and these guys were either a cosplay joke... or too fine for primetime. Two were standing guard near the medical gurney and two were generally flanking an elegant faded blonde woman who he supposed was Thor's mom. As soon as Tony entered the room the guard's eyes latched on to him.

From the hard eyed expressions on their faces, Tony was not leaning towards classifying them being some sort of cosplay joke.

Thor may have had god like strength and be determined to immediately drag Tony over to his mother, but Tony was equally determined to stop at his bar first. In the game of Scotch vs Norse God, Scotch wins.

Tony wanted a drink. Tony wanted his bracelets. Tony wanted to stay far away from those damn big swords as he possibly could.

"So, your majesty, welcome to my humble abode. Can I offer you a drink?" Tony asked as thunder god escorted his mother over to the bar area.

Thor was not the only Asgardian looking like five miles of bad road. While the queen was quite good looking, in an older middle aged, MILF way, she also looked extremely tired and stressed. Really, really stressed with circles under her eyes, ashen skin and a small muscle twitch at her temple every now and then.

Both gods shook their head no in regard to the drink. So after taking a sip of his, Tony slid on his bracelets all sneaky like and then asked, "So. Your Majesty, what can I do for you?"

Hands loosely clasped in front of her, she proceeded to tell him.

“Well fuck me.” Tony said in a toneless voice, frankly astonished at the plan that had been laid out before him.

Both Asgardians narrowed their eyes at him, but then Thor leaned down and loudly whispered to his mother, “It’s a very improper expression of disbelief... Not an invitation for personal relations that would frankly be insulting to you and your rank mother.” He glared meaningfully at Tony, “Starkson is a bit crude in his speech, but believe me, he means you no disrespect.”

Tony was more than a little alarmed, lighting flashed in the otherwise clear sky temporarily washing out all the color in the penthouse, He hastened to apologize over the loud rumble of thunder that rattled the penthouse’s windows.

“No. No, of course not. Sorry, your majesty... sometimes I don’t express myself as well as I should”

Not that he normally gave a rats-ass how he spoke to people, no matter who they were. However Tony supposed that he should take a bit more care in the future when speaking to the mother of a large blonde capable of electrocuting him or smashing him into a thin smear on the floor... or both.

“Ah, disbelief?” The queen’s brow cleared. “No, I assure you Son of Stark, that all of my words have been truthful. I was truly distraught until my son told me of the security in your tower, the vigilance of your watcher, the cleverness of your chatelaine and the loyalty of your metal servants.” The queen’s tired face lit up a bit as she smiled at him. “My son also told me that you were the only one of his Midgardian shield brothers to extend a kindness to my Loki when he was injured.”

Tony wanted to tear his hair out.

One fucking drink was all it took to give the Space Viking Queen the idea that he would make a good babysitter slash jailor for her crazy assed son. Well that and his tower he supposed, and Jarvis, and Pepper... How the hell did Point Break even explained Dummy, Butterfingers and You to his mother? Tony couldn’t even imagine... but still.

Damn.

Who knew that Thor would fricking throw him under the bus with all of this. Fury would have a fit if he even knew Rock of Ages was on the planet, not to mention what Pepper was going to say would say.

Tony looked forlornly down at his now empty glass.

“You sure I can’t get you guys anything?” Tony asked as he topped off his drink. “No? You sure?”

Okay then. Getting ice to stall for a few moments, Tony used the mirror behind the bar to check out what was going on with the rest of his uninvited guests.

Some scary old broad, who had two nurse looking chicks assisting her, was doing something vaguely medical to Loki. It was difficult to decide who was the unhappiest of that trio, the old scary doc looking lady who appeared to be cleaning wounds, the blonde holding a big bowl of steaming water or the dishwasher blonde on the other side who held a tray that the bloody cleansing cloths were being deposited on. The guards standing at the head and foot of Loki’s stretcher divided their time between glaring at Tony and glaring at the unmoving god on the stretcher.

Asgardians must not sit without an invitation, Tony thought, I have nine miles of sofas and everyone is standing.

A few of the queen's handmaidens were standing near the other two guards over by the terrace door. One of the ladies was holding a large bag of some sort. Not a one of them looked happy for some reason, not the guards, not the chicks.

Oh well join the club then, because I am definitely not happy either.

It wasn't like Tony was even sorry that Loki had been almost beaten to death... twice. So... Okay, maybe it wasn't right for people chained up and unable to defend themselves to be beaten, but honestly the jerk kinda deserved it. Not that the Asgardians who did it gave a flip about damage and destruction on earth, they were mad about their rainbow bridge being destroyed and the whole taking over the throne attempt.

Which may have accounted for more than a little of the guilt that Rudolf's mom and brother were experiencing, since according to what they told Tony, Thor is the one who actually destroyed the bridge and the whole 'usurped throne thing' apparently didn't happen as the Queen put Loki on the throne as regent, so she could spend more time with her sick husband. Of course Thor's BFF's who jumped to the wrong conclusion and spread that nasty rumor that Reindeer Games did usurp the throne didn't help either. This of course set up a confrontation with Thor and Bag of Cats who was feeling more than a little unstable as he had just found the day before he was adopted. From a faraway land that was universally hated by all Asgardians.

Nice.

Still none of this was Tony's problem and besides he's a genius, billionaire, playboy, and philanthropist. He was definitely not a warden, prison guard or rehabilitation therapist for a deranged Norse god.

"You know, as much as I would like to help, I can't, the main reason being that Fury would never allow it." Tony said more than a bit untruthfully, since the main reason really was that he flat didn't want to be within twenty miles of that window tossing freak.

Not that he wanted to come right out and admit that to an over protective big hammer swinging brother and a distraught mom with her own hit squad.

Not that they were making him nervous mind you, the two by psycho prince were merely glaring at him menacingly, it was the other two, with the increasingly hostile expressions that were slowly shifting closer and that worried him. Eyeing them uneasily Tony turned to the queen, "Ah your majesty....,"

An offer that you shouldn't refuse

Chapter Summary

Tony and Frigga take a tour of the lab. Loki bleeds. Stay Thor, Stay!

Chapter Notes

Alrightly. I was going to try to space this out until I could get it finished. But I decided to just update until I run out of finished chapters and then hope I am caught up by then.

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 82,000 words so far

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 3 – An offer that you shouldn't refuse

Queen Frigga waved a placating hand and the two advancing guards stepped backwards to their original position, allowing Tony's heart rate to return to normal.

"Son of Stark, Thor tells me you are a craftsman of great renown. I would like to see your workshop," said Frigga kindly but with eyes boring into Tony as if looking for something important. It was a friendly look, but so focused it made him nervous.

"Umm. Lab. I do science, not wood working. I call it a lab."

"Very well, I would like to see your lab."

"Well you see, I don't normally let just anyone down there, so—"

"Fortunately, I am not just anyone; I am the Queen of Asgard. If you would Anthony Starkson," she tilted her head giving him an amused look. "Let us go visit your lab."

"Now."

Okay then.

Tony wasn't quite sure what to think. Frigga was part '*Queen of England Don't mess with me I have armed guards*' and part '*Anthony Stark you listen to your mother and get over here right*

now’.

“You know, there is nothing I would like more than giving you a tour of my lab. Really, I’d love it; it would be the high light of my evening, honest. But the thing is....” Tony trailed off; he could feel the lies and evasions withering on his lips as Frigga regarded him steadily.

Tony wondered at his sudden reluctance to continue. It wasn’t like he hadn’t made with the bullshit before. He in fact he normally loved the feeling of knowing, just knowing that he was winding up important powerful people and there was nothing they could do about it. He loved knowing that he wouldn’t be stopped because his position, genius or money protected him. Often he infuriated them to the point of screaming and or violence, sometimes when he was really on a roll, both.

Unfortunately for some reason his normal line of irritating deflecting patter wasn’t working this evening. Tony wasn’t sure if it was just that she was a goddess or queen or if it was just the mother in her, but something was making his tongue turn to lead, stopping his normal line of bullshit in mid-flow.

“Now if you please.” Her voice was very firm, and Tony couldn’t help but notice the uneasy shifting from the two huge guards she had waved back a few minutes earlier.

“Okay. It’s a bit messy, but okay, come on, I’ll show it to you.”

“Thor, you will stay here and keep and watch over your brother,” Frigga said in a Mom-Voice that invited no disagreement.

Trailed by the guards and handmaidens who had been standing by the terrace, Tony reluctantly escorted the queen down to his lab.

“Umm, perhaps if they waited here?” Tony asked anxiously as they exited the elevator. “Some of the stuff down here is a bit fragile or dangerous or,” Tony shrugged, “frankly both. It’s best not to have too many people wandering through the lab if they aren’t familiar with it.

Frigga inclined her head in agreement and waved her entourage to a standstill a few paces away from the elevator and then followed Tony into the lab.

“Mrs. Odin—“

“Frigga please, or Queen Frigga if you must. I do not at this moment want to hear the name of the man who could not keep my son safe.” Frigga said, disgust saturating every syllable.

Okay, Tony thought, little bit of a problem in the Casa de Odin.

“Please your majesty, sit down,” Tony said waving her towards his own station chair.

Frigga smiled at him, and for perhaps the first time since he met her, her expression seemed to lighten a bit. “Thank you son of Stark, but if you would not mind, I would prefer to walk around your... lab as we speak.”

“My name is Tony, well actually it’s Anthony. I...” he faltered for a moment at her slightly puzzled expression. “Tony is what I prefer, Anthony is okay if you have to use it, Stark in a pinch but please no more ‘son of’ stuff.” While he did try to stay impassive, from the look he was now receiving from Frigga, Tony was well aware of that his distaste for the word ‘son’ was pretty evident to her.

“As you would... Anthony.” Frigga said, taking his arm and continuing her exploration of his lab.

Oh well, at least it wasn't Starkson.

Tony didn't offer any comment on the items they were walking past, but he did briefly explain anything that caught her eye.

Despite not wanting anything to do with Loki, he was curious.

“So exactly how many years are we talking about here?” Tony asked, watching her out of the corner of his eye. “Punishment wise I mean.”

“Loki's initial sentence was to be beaten in public,” Frigga did not even try to restrain the flickers of anger and betrayal that flitted across her features, “have his magic bound and be imprisoned for one hundred and one years.” Frigga irritably brushed a hand down the finely woven, richly embroidered beige gown she was wearing, stopping just short of an area filled with intricate design and unfortunately several blood stains.

“Initial?”

“Oh yes... Son... Anthony. Initial. After serving time in prison he was to make restitution to Asgard and her people by serving them in public works projects for the next four hundred years. His magic would still be bound and he would only be allowed to use it at the direct command of the King of Asgard. Leaving him essentially at the mercy of whatever protection Odin decided to provide.”

Well, adopted or not, it was pretty apparent where Loki learned how to sneer.

“Okay... So why me?” Tony asked as they headed over to the suits on display.

“You can provide security to keep watch over him to satisfy Odin, without guards or others that can further abuse him. I am willing to pay for my son's care and safety.”

“Well I'm not sure what Point Break... er... Thor told you about me, but I don't need your money, I have more than enough ...” Frigga's voice rolled right over his, as if he was not her only audience.

“The All Father may have allowed his council to pass this sentence on his son, but as his Queen and wife I can take it upon myself to see to the details of the sentence.” Her hands tightened as her polite mask slipped a bit, both expression and voice becoming a bit fierce. “Especially since in just recent events, he has failed not once, but three times to keep my son safe.”

Yeah, okay. But Frigga wasn't the only pissed about recent events.

“Ah. Well, let's be frank, your little Loki threw me through a window to plummet to my death, okay... so I didn't die, but he didn't know I wouldn't when he threw me. So what makes you think I want anything to do with him, let alone want to protect him from all the err... earthguardians who would want to get at him? Which there are a lot of by the way.” Tony asked, surprised that despite what he had just said to her to see a warm, almost motherly affection on Frigga's face as she looked at him, her lips curved in a soft fond smile, the type of which hadn't been directed at him since he was a kid.

Tony was uncomfortably aware of a warm feeling in his chest which had nothing to do with the booze he had so recently imbibed.

“Besides which, I am an Earthling, and will be lucky to live another thirty years tops, less if you believe my doctor, don’t you think you should make a more permanent arrangement?” Not that Tony was trying to discourage her...

Oh. Wait. Yeah, he was.

“Starkso--, Anthony, the person who threw you out a window, was not my son.” Her face wrinkled up in thought, “And there are several ways to extend a mortal’s life span, while not common, we have occasionally had Midgardian servitors.”

Ouch.

“Well he certainly did throw--” Frigga held up a hand, almost touching his lips to stop him from speaking.

“Loki is being punished for a deed that occurred on Asgard, not what happened on Midgard. The All Father and his council do not hold him accountable for those. And while the story behind his invasion of Midgard is not permitted to be spoken of in detail, it was regrettably caused by decisions made by Odin.” She sighed heavily, “Some recently of course, but also decisions made many years ago which came back to haunt our family.” Frigga worried her lip a moment, before continuing tiredly, “Although, I do wish that Loki had chosen a different way to cope.”

Tony, who had been just standing there, watching her, started to rock slightly, his hard soled dress shoes making small tapping noises on the polished concrete floor. “Three times huh?” He closed his eyes moment thinking, as the slight frown that had not left his face since his leaving the party deepened. “Recently? Ah. The fight on the rainbow express that Thor had mentioned?”

“That is part of it, yes.” Frigga agreed with a bit of a hiss, reaching up to with one hand to press the side of her neck, “His father has never understood that Loki is not Thor and dealing with him as he would Thor will not work. Never has the All Father understood this, no matter how many times he has been proved wrong over the years.”

Okay, got a bit of heat there. Loki Mommy is not happy with Loki Daddy, that’s plain to see. But still...

“Um,.. You know, no offence, but Loki’s a pretty big boy. Might not be entirely Odin... The All Dad’s job at this point in time.”

“Really?” Frigga struck him with a chilling glare, arms sweeping up to fold in front of her, in a plainly defensive posture. “Time moves differently among the realms, Loki’s father, who will most likely live several thousand more of your years, is over six times older than Loki. Loki reached his minor majority during the time he lost in the void. He is many years away from his major majority when he will be able to officially join the crown council or be appointed to any official position.”

Wow, Tony thought stunned, totally did not see that one coming.

“Wait? Let me get this straight,” Tony asked incredulously, throwing out an arm in agitation, “Invasion Boy just got his learner’s permit and we were the first place he visited while out joy riding?”

Still defensive, but continuing in a more conciliatory tone, Frigga said, “Please don’t misunderstand. We live a long time Anthony, we try to make sure that our young people have out grown all their rash foolishness before their actions are truly considered those of an adult. All young boys go off to war, but while both Thor and Loki have spent many centuries of your time

defending Asgard, neither of them is even considered old enough to officially marry without our approval.”

“You’re shitting me, right?”

Frigga’s brows knitted a bit in confusion at Tony’s use of this phrase.

“So... What was the deal with the horse then?”

Her eyes narrowed and her tone became glacially cold. “A youthful indiscretion that occurred as a result of Loki trying to fix a problem for Asgard. A problem that my son should not have had to deal with alone in the first place,” She spat. “Nothing more I assure you.”

Oh.

Well that certainly was a touchy subject for Loki momma. Tony wondered if Odin had got his ass reamed out over that incident too, although he thought he was starting to see a trend here.

While he had no doubt that Thor was the kind of kid who was called into the principal’s office on a regular basis for fighting and roughhousing. Thunder Daddy, who had most likely done the same in his youth, would understand, cut him some slack and occasionally discipline Hammer when he absolutely had to.

But, Tony was willing to bet big money that Momma’s little Trickster, was the kind of kid who had the FBI show up at his door, no doubt due to some overly exuberant hacking to tag ‘I was here’ in high security government files. Stuff like that would most likely make Poppa Odin flip his shit. Not only would the King of the Gods not understand why the kid would want to do it, he probably would have no idea how to stop the kid from doing it again. And as Tony knew from personal experience, that could get ugly.

Normal parental problem perhaps, but Poppa Odin did have the major advantage of having his very own dungeon. Something Tony was sure his father had wished for on numerous occasions. Something Tony was very glad Howard did not have, especially after having seen the broken mischief maker.

“Midgardians youths go through a period time thinking they are immortal and unbreakable, and they know better than anyone else what is going on. Is this not correct?”

“Yeah, most of them,” Tony said, thinking how some Earthgardians, not to mention any names or anything, stay in that mindset a lot longer than others. Or didn’t outgrow it at all.

“Mostly until reality sets in, usually in their late teens or early twenties,” Tony told her. “Plowing a car into a telephone pole, or something else stupid, usually works to snap them out of it.” The engineer elaborated, thinking of the numerous wake-up calls, many of them automobile or alcohol related that he and his classmates had experienced.

“Imagine how long this period of youthful delusion must last for beings that actually ‘are’ almost immortal. Beings who can live up to twenty thousand of your years rather than only a hundred years at best. Beings who can bounce back from almost any type of injury, often with no healers aid at all.”

She regarded Tony steadily as he considered this.

“Okay,” Tony conceded slowly, “I can see that the stupid phase might last a bit longer.”

Both were lost in thought for a moment. Then Tony lifted his chin defiantly, taking a step closer to Frigga, almost brushing against her personal space.

Geeze, she wasn't even wearing heels and she was still slightly taller than him. Damn tall Asgardians, even their moms were freakishly tall, he groused internally.

“However, not trying to be disobliging... Well, yeah, actually I am trying to be disobliging. I still have no intention of running a prison for your wayward boy.”

They stared at each other for a long minute, before Frigga shifted her focus to the display storage area on the far wall. “Your metal suits are made of iron?” she asked in a polite almost social tone.

Change of topic?

Why?

Tony was suspicious, her kid is bleeding all over my tower and she wants to talk about my suits? It's not even like she was a fan or anything.

Whatever.

“Not really, the first one, the prototype was, well it was steel, not iron, but close enough I guess. Now they are made from a gold-titanium alloy.” He grimaced, “And I am experimenting with a titanium beryllium geodesic alloy. But that one is still a ways off. And it may not work anyway,” Tony concluded with a shrug.

Frigga began drifting closer to the display, stopping beside a relatively, for Tony's work shop, uncluttered work bench.

“Indeed?” Frigga pointed and made a graceful motion that had her handmaiden, who like the guards beside her had been watching them intently, hurrying over carrying a large black silk bag. At the queen's direction, she set it on a nearby work bench with a solid thud. Frigga waved the woman back towards the elevator doors with the others.

At this location, her attendants were even more out of earshot than when they had first started speaking. The queen then motioned towards the bag. “Please open it Starkson.”

“Please, call me Tony, he said as he turned to the bag. Not that Tony really cared what was in the bag, but hey, he was interested to see what a tall, blonde, Space Viking Queen would try to bribe him with.

He was curious okay? It happens.

Tony, untied a heavy silk cording that was holding the bag shut on one end. There was a large metal chest of some sort inside the bag, a large heavy chest. As he struggled to lift the box and slide it out of the bag, Tony was struck at just how freaking strong, even the average run of the mill Asgardian chicks were.

Seriously, stupidly strong.

Tony was willing to bet that even the more mature, Momma Odinwife would be able to whip his ass with no problem what so ever. At least as long as Tony wasn't wearing his suit. Heck, give her a sword or even a baseball bat and Tony might not even want to let her try it if he did have his suit on.

Once he had lifted the chest, Frigga came to his assistance and tugged the bag away from it. The uncovered box was an intricately carved and embossed silver green metal of some sort. At first Tony thought it the green luster might be some sort of coating, but after careful, if surreptitious examination of the engraved areas and a small nick he found, he was inclined to think the color might be a property of whatever strange alloy it was made from.

It took a lot to dumbfound Tony Stark. But a insanely heavy chest made of an unknown metal, he had to admit, that just might to it.

Okay? What the fuck is this? He wondered frowning up at a smug Space Viking Queen.

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Bribes are wonderful things

Chapter Summary

Frigga has Tony pegged. Bruce Banner is summoned. Tony really hates magic.

Chapter Notes

I just want to say I wrote this months before any mention of ships in any movie you might or might not be interested in. Yay Me! I'm psychic or psychotic or one of those words that start with a P.

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 82,000 words so far

Chapter 4 -Bribes

Frigga reached out and stroked an exquisitely manicured finger along the top of the mystery chest. "This is made with Adamantite, a Dwarf metal of great beauty and strength. Lovely in its pure state like this of course, however, it is more useful as a catalyst alloy with other types of metals, creating such as items as the energy absorbing Cavorite alloy used for the hulls of our self-powered sky ships." She met and held Tony's sharp inquiring look as she reached into a sleeve pocket and pulled out a small key which she held up between them.

"Open it," she breathed, watching him intently.

Tony turned the key and slowly opened the chest. That the trays inside were awash with jewelry was not surprising. What was amazing was that with just a glance; Tony knew he could only identify about half of the metal, stones and materials being used in the jewelry's construction. Once piece that caught Tony's eye was a lovely hinged plate, gold necklace with a blue faceted stone that glowed. It glowed a lot.

Looking to Frigga for permission, Tony picked up the necklace and examined it carefully. Frowning, he cupped his hands around the stone to block out as much external light as he could. Peeking between his fingers, he saw that the stone had not just been reflecting light to a ridiculous extent due to faceting, but actually producing it from within. Despite his attempt to maintain a poker face, both brows rose inquiringly.

“Titanite,” Figga explained, touching the gold sectional plates that made up the necklace. “Which is also used in construction of some sort. I’m not too clear on the details. And of course a Star Stone.”

“Really?” Tony said almost absent mindedly as he plucked several more items out of the chest. “Jarvis, I need a material run down on these please. Put the readouts up on a display for each piece.”

Frigga trailed Tony as he moved several benches away to lay various pieces one by one on a sensor pad. Closing the clear lexan box between each scan, Tony intently watched as the floating displays more often than not refused to come up with a material analysis.

“Sir, perhaps you might have better luck in Doctor Banner’s lab. He has several other different kinds of analyzers.” Jarvis said.

“Ya know, I don’t think so buddy.” Tony mused, stroking his neatly trimmed goatee and looking intently at the various displays.

He turned his head and studied Frigga.

“You don’t give up do you?” Tony asked almost amused.

Frigga gave a sad chuckle. “Sta-- Anthony, I have the gift of foreknowledge. While I can’t proclaim my prophecies, I would be ill served if I couldn’t use the information to get something I desperately want.”

Apparently this skill had not served her too well in the recent past as she crumpled a bit, and said hollowly, “Would that I had thought to take the time to look at recent events in greater detail, perhaps things would have turned out better.”

Yeah really, Tony thought to himself, me and psycho kid wish you had too.

Walking back to the chest, Tony placed the jewelry back inside, before he shut the lid and locked it, keeping his one hand its lid.

He stood there, looking at, but not really seeing the key in his hand, thinking furiously. While the engineer still wanted no parts of an injured god of mischief being incarcerated in his tower, even one that was power bound and of supposedly reduced to mortal strength. However... Tony would be lying if he said he wasn’t intrigued by the strange materials the goddess had shown him.

“So... Your Majesty, how much material can be delivered at one time from Asgard?”

He noticed a sly smile curling the tips of Frigga’s lips, relief tentatively stealing over her face.

“Well without the BiFrost, it is of course more difficult to travel and the amount carried would be perhaps a half a ton per person. When the BiFrost is repaired, then several wagon loads at a time easily.”

Okay, maybe not enough for production runs, unless the amount of material per item used was very small. But definitely enough for experimenting with or trying in a future suit upgrade. Tony pursed his lips, as he unconsciously pocketed the key, “So, any idea when the Rainbow Bridge might be fixed?”

Tony was taken aback at the gleefully feral face presented to him. Frigga’s eyes took on a wicked light and her mouth turned up in a frankly nasty smile that showed way more teeth than he thought

the queen normally displayed. Kinda scary look actually, again he could see the resemblance between Loki Mamma and her maniac son. Adopted or not, they had obviously spent a lot of time in each other's company.

"Oh," She trilled, dark joy apparent in her voice and expression, "The senior dwarf artificers and our best mages have been working to repair it, without any success, since shortly after it was destroyed. I'm afraid the loss of my son to the void, dealt them a severe setback."

No?

No!

Tony scrubbed hard little circles on his temples, his fingers trying to rub away the sharp stabbing pain that shot through them. He had to be misunderstanding that last statement. Surely she was not trying to tell him that Reindeer Games knew how to build an Einstein-Rosen Bridge.

He lifted incredulous eyes upon the queen, "Are you trying to tell me that Rudolf—I mean Loki 'knows' how to build a Rainbow Bridge? As in a bridge that can transport people and stuff from one planet to another?"

Frigga beamed at him, projecting such fierce, bright pride that it was almost blinding to experience.

"Rather let us say that Loki understands the theory behind the construction better than anyone in the Nine Realms. After all there is no one now alive from when it was originally constructed. But even as a child he was curious about it and continually badgered information out of the old mages who had worked upon it in their youth."

Then the prideful light went out like someone had flipped a switch.

"An unusual interest for an 'Asgardian' child," She told him, distain dripping from the word 'Asgardian'.

Taking a few agitated steps, Frigga tossed her head irritably as her lip curled in an ugly sneer, "Despite their disgust for his supposedly unmanly mastery of seiðr and their contempt for his scholarship, no one on the council even seriously considered giving Loki a death sentence." A bitter, hateful laugh escaped her lips, "No, they would have rather have my son imprisoned and shackled to their will for the next five hundred years."

Rage was clear in every line of her body, in the stiffness of her shoulders and the rigidity of her face. Tony played nervously with his suit bracelets and considered putting at least one work bench between them as a safety zone.

"And the All Father did not gainsay them, even though it was in his power to do so," She hissed. "But the council failed to keep him from further harm. His 'father' failed, numerous times, to keep him safe. So I say that they have lost their chance." She fastened her brilliant blue eyes upon Tony, willing him to understand.

"Let them realize what they have lost through their pig headed carelessness," Frigga said scathingly still watching Tony's every move. "When they do they will come on their knees and offer my Loki his freedom and restoration of his position in exchange for his help."

Okay, again with the knees. That has got to be an Asgardian kink of some sort, Tony thought sourly.

Well hell. Who knew that Loki Momma was going to make such a compelling case for him keeping the god of assholes incarcerated?

“Okay then. Jarvis, get Brucie on the phone for me please.” Tony asked as he patted the Jewelry chest one more time, his hand leaving it with clear reluctance. Lost in thought for a moment he worried his lower lip.

“Not to put too fine a point on it, but losing access to Loki is going to be a major ass-fucking for Asgard fixing their rainbow bridge isn’t it?”

“Oh yes.” The Queen breathed delightedly as she stepped closer and smiled at Tony.

Okay, this bridge thing... losing it would be like suddenly losing every international flight into or out of the country. Yeah, certain small groups of well-connected people could still get where they wanted to go... Tony glanced up at Frigga, but then looked over at the gaggle of guards and handmaidens standing by the door and then lowered his head in thought, but ONLY the very powerful and well-connected had the option to come and go as they pleased... even if it was more difficult. Everyone else? Totally screwed.

He looked up at Frigga thoughtfully, “You know, you’re taking this well for an Asgardian aren’t you?”

Twirling and then tucking an escaped lock of blonde hair back up into her hairdo, her finely shaped hands moving with the unerring skill of someone who has done this for centuries if not longer, Frigga smiled at Tony. “While as their queen, I of course must consider what is in the best interest of the Æsir, even if they are currently persecuting my son... however I was born a Vanir.” Curling her fingers out, she regarded her palm as though something important was inscribed upon it, before rolling her fingers back in towards her palm.

After a moment, she looked solemnly up at Tony, “So, Star— Anthony, do we have a deal?” she asked, the corners of her mouth curling up impishly.

Tony grinned at her, “You knew you were getting a deal when you walked in here, didn’t you?”

Frigga’s kid might be crazy murdering maniac and I may be a selfish asshole, but damn if I don’t know an exclusive opportunity when I see one, Tony thought gleefully.

“Jarvis, call Pepper, tell her we need her back here to cross some T’s and dot some I’s.” He waved her over to the chair by his design table, “So, who in the government did your magic crystal ball tell you we needed to call to keep SHIELD off of your little Lokikin’s case?” Tony asked as he opened up a few screens, “Oh, and Jarvis? Start taking notes please.”

As Frigga at last consented to be seated, Tony’s eyes narrowed in amusement. “So, your Majesty... What exactly are the terms and conditions you’re proposing?”

OoooO

While waiting for Bruce, Pepper, and a Deputy Secretary of Defense to arrive he and Frigga had agreed to several basic terms.

Tony would have the contents of the chest appraised for value; keeping in mind that many of the pieces within were unique even on Asgard, let alone the value they contained in being materials not available on earth. Tony, not Stark International, not SHIELD, not the Avengers would deduct the cost of Loki’s care from that total, and when those funds ran low, Tony would either receive another chest or could make a specific request for certain materials, allowing of course lead time

for the ones that were not readily available even in Asgard. Oh, and he had to send the Queen a detailed statement of charges and a condition update every three months in an envelope, wax sealed with a signet ring she gave him.

Tony was obligated to provide Loki with food, water, clothing, a suitable environment and medical care as needed. Also reading and writing material and some opportunity for physical activity. The one item they had a disagreement about was that physical activity, since there was no way in hell Tony was letting the irritating little punk outside, even if it was only up on his roof.

Eventually, after Jarvis pulled up the architectural plans of the floor he was going to house Loki on, and explained what a bike was, it was agreed that there was sufficient unused space outside where his cell was going to be placed for Loki to exercise, since it was as Jarvis pointed out, having the entire floor gave Loki an area large enough to ride a bike in. That unknown to the Asgardians, form of transportation briefly threatened to sidetrack their conversation, but they were finally able to continue.

The cell, or suite as Frigga insisted on calling it, would be a modified version of a Hulk bunker. It was slightly larger with an attached bathroom and an airlock sort of double door chamber attached to it. That way Loki's food and what not could be delivered and that area secured before the door to Loki's area would open to allow him to access it. Tony would be paying for that, since it was going to be a permanent improvement to his property.

Amazingly, at least to Tony, Queen Frigga was more concerned that Loki's cell be strong enough to keep unauthorized persons out, rather than worrying that it was going to keep Loki in. Or maybe not so amazing, Loki had already been assaulted twice. At any rate, once Tony had explained that Thor with his hammer was the only known way to ever even damage the walls, she acknowledged that it should be safe enough.

Frigga insisted that knowledge of and access to Loki be restricted to just Tony, Pepper and Bruce, or Tony's personal physician if Bruce was not available for an emergency. No one else was allowed near Loki unless one of the three of him with them the entire time. At first she wanted to restrict it to just Tony, but agreed also allowing the other two after Tony pointed out that he sometimes traveled. Thor, later taking the queen aside for a private chat also helped get her to agree.

"Your building's spirit and metal servants can take care of his needs and at least I don't have to worry that they will abuse him." Frigga said with a tired smile. Which for some reason made Tony feel kind of bad for her and maybe just a little bit for her kid.

But they had been at it for hours and Tony was starting to feel the events of the day weighing him down. He wished whoever Frigga had called from Washington would hurry up and get here, so they could be done with this mess.

"Yeah, and if your kid starts to give me grief? What then?" Tony had demanded.

Frigga closed her eyes for a moment; her features pinched in pain, her hand coming up to haltingly stroke, as if for comfort, the gold filigree pendant hanging from her necklace. She regarded Tony with a sigh.

"He will not be your guest Anthony; even I can't change the fact that this will be his prison. If he should become... unruly, certainly comforts and privileges can be revoked until his behavior is amended."

"Heimdall will also be watching him, in case there is any sort of problem that you cannot deal

with.”

“Well that right there, we have a problem. I’m not a big fan of having some all-seeing Norse Busybody watching every move that goes on in my tower. Let’s talk about that.”

OoooO

There had been a quick whispered fight with Pepper. Which Tony totally won when he mentioned the various unknown materials he was getting access too. Pepper then disappeared to start wrangling Jarvis’ notes into a preliminary contract.

Tony dragged Bruce upstairs to introduce him to the Asgardian healer and help get Loki over to the medical wing. Bruce wanted to run some tests, get a base line of Loki’s injuries and details of any recommended treatment needed. The good doctor wasn’t happy about it by any means, but Bruce came around a bit when he learned that the god’s strength, magic and memories of the last several years had been removed leaving him vulnerable to repeated assaults for reasons he wouldn’t even know about.

Trust Bruce to feel for the underdog, even if said underdog had been a murdering megalomaniac world conquer just months earlier.

As per the way things usually worked out, the Washington group arrived within minutes of each other. During their original phone call, it had taken several minutes for Jarvis and the Queen to convince Daniel Nudact, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, that her call was not a hoax. However the man had remained in contact with Jarvis and had shown up with two other officials, one a Special Prosecutor and the other the Department of Justice Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications. None of them, Nudact assured the queen would allow any information to leak, not now and not in the future. Also, due to the queen’s insistence, they had already hashed out amongst themselves a level of classification that exceeded even the SHIELD council that Nick Fury answered to.

His attention split between them all, Tony had reluctantly stayed with Pepper and Bruce to get them on board, while Frigga, over the strenuous objections of her guards, took the Washington Three and the chick who had been carrying the chest into a conference room for a private conversation. Tony consoled himself that he would watch the security vid of their meeting later to find out what was said.

It wasn’t until the next day he discovered that somehow, white light and an undulating hum was all that the recording showed. Magic, Tony hated magic.

OoooO

Once they finished working on the injured ex-god, he was put in some sort of healing sleep coma and surround by a glowing green haze. Since Loki would stay like that until he was healed and the haze disappeared, there wasn’t much else that needed to be done with him. So Tony, Bruce and Eir wheeled him down to the Hulk’s cage for Jarvis to monitor. Fortunately for Tony, not for Loki, it was going to be at least two to eight weeks for Loki to come out of his coma thing. That would give Tony plenty of time to get Loki’s floor and an improved cell ready before the stricken god-ling woke up.

He, Tony Stark personally, had a contact with the royal family of an alien planet. This contract was co-signed by three of the biggest behind the scenes power hitters in Washington and said contract made him the not-so-proud owner of one bat shit crazy Asgardian Prince and a chest full of new material to play with. But as exciting as the new material was, the last few hours had been as

boring as hell and it took everything he could do not to fall asleep during the final review and appending of medical reports and then thank god, the signing. One wrinkle that was totally Asgardian was the Queen laying a geas on everyone to keep the matter private.

A magically enforced confidentiality agreement... Tony really hated magic.

Doctor Bruce

Chapter Summary

Doctor Banner violates patient confidentiality, no one is amused.

Chapter Notes

Tags have been updated to include references to Past Rape/Non Con and others, please check tags before going further.

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 82,000 words so far

Chapter 5 - Doctor Bruce

"Hey, Tony. Jarvis told me you were up." Bruce said wandering into the kitchen carrying an empty tea cup. Tony had talked him in to staying for a while and Bruce was comfortable in a small suite of rooms on the medical floor.

"What's up Brucie? Oooh, nice bling my man, where did that come from?" Tony asked nodding towards a fairly ornate and frankly a little girly, gold and green pendent that Bruce was wearing... which reminded Tony of something... but it would take several more cups of coffee for him to think what it was.

"Yeah, nice huh?" Bruce replied a bit embarrassed, pushing his glasses back into place with one finger. "It's *was* the queen's necklace, but she gave it to me last week when she was saying good bye to her kid."

Ah, that's where Tony had seen it before.

"Payment for services?" Tony asked distractedly, looking in the fridge for some left overs to eat. "I gotta say buddy, it's not exactly your style." Triumphant, he pulled out a mostly full carton of Szechuan Beef left over from lunch the day before and grabbed a fork from the silverware drawer.

"Kinda," Bruce said looking a bit shamefaced. "I think she was worried that my 'warrior' would come out and damage her kid if, er... rather when... he turned mouthy. She claims the guy we saw was not really him, but did admit that his mouth could get on people's last nerve when he was upset." He touched it gently with a finger, "She put a spell on it to keep the Other Guy from coming out unless I take it off."

Tony's head jerked up, his fork full of cold spicy beef stopped in midair, forgotten as he stared intently at Bruce.

"Really?" Tony trilled, as sauce dripped from his stalled fork onto the floor.

"And it works?"

Bruce nodded.

"How does it work?" Tony said, almost to himself.

"I don't know, but even some jerk running a light and almost running me over a few days ago didn't faze him, and let me tell you I was plenty angry."

At Tony's speculative look Bruce closed his hand protectively over the pendant and glared. "And no Tony, you are not touching it."

"Aw Brucie," whined Tony, setting down his food and circling around the center island to get a closer look. "Just a few little tests and maybe some nice non-invasive scans."

"No Tony." Bruce told him so fiercely that Tony was taken aback.

Well... Bruce was a science bro, so either he already ran some tests, which Tony would find out about sooner or later.... Or... Control of the Hulk, real control, would open up a lot of possibilities for Bruce to actually have a life, a real life. Like possibly even get laid and other blood pressure raising things like alcohol, crowds and maybe he would even be able to yell at a barista for getting his order wrong... If the pendant kept working. If nobody, like say Tony, messed it up that was.

And she did it on the fly to protect her kid. Tony wondered how powerful Frigga was, she was obviously powerful enough to stand up to Loki-daddy but what else could she do, he would have to ask Snape when he woke up. Speaking of which...

"How's my little sleeping beauty? Did you check on him yet? Is it okay to move the princess into her new chamber?"

Hazy Asgardian healing comas were wonderful things, you didn't even have to rotate the patient.

"Yeah, he is." Bruce said, pouring more hot water into his cup and fiddling uncomfortably with a new teabag. "I couldn't note it in my medical report, but Princess isn't really too far off the mark you know. You might not want to use that nickname when he wakes up."

"He's a girl?"

Bruce didn't answer; he just stood there looking uncomfortable.

No.

Really?

Tony was now wildly curious, wondering what exactly was hidden underneath the donated packs of boxer briefs and tank tops he had supplied when the stricken god was being cleaned up. Bruce's eyes regarded him steadily over his glasses.

"No shit?" Tony said, amazed at the news.

Well. What do you know?

Tony thought that might explain the whole fascination thing he went through right after the invasion. The playboy had spent hours looking at stills of Loki, not vid, not voice, but fricking stills. So unless he had been thinking of being a celebrity contestant and incorporating Asgardian Fashion on the next Project Runway season... Which he wasn't. Tony would have to admit, if only to himself, he had been checking the dude out. Not that Tony couldn't admire a good looking guy, he could. But it was just he had been kind of confused about exactly why he was so interested. Not that Loki having so many androgynous features had helped his confusion, or the whole brainy-crazy thing, which was always interesting, oh he was powerful, that was completely and totally hot.

"Yeah?" Tony agreed lost in his private thoughts, "You know Bruce, nothing about Loki makes sense."

Well if anyone on earth had wanted to tick off 'Banged Imprisoned Alien Wanna-be Overlord' from their bucket list, it would have been Tony. So maybe it's a good thing he hadn't known. Tony felt himself getting warm. Hot, crazy, *unexpectedly female*, was leaving the planet the next day? Hell yeah, he definitely would have rerouted the security feed and at least tried to make friends. Fuck, he had been reluctantly fascinated when he thought Invasion-Loki was a guy, so tall, with legs that didn't quit, that face, a voice that sent shivers... But also female?

"What?" He demanded becoming aware of Bruce's frown.

By the glare Bruce was throwing his way, the good doctor seemed to have been aware of at least the general direction of Tony's private musings. And Bruce was apparently not very happy to see Tony head in that direction either.

But hey, I'm a guy, guys thinks things like that. Well obviously Bruce doesn't... But maybe he'll start if that whole pendant thing works out for him and he gets a chance to be a regular guy instead of a tea drinking, yoga chanting, Hulk sitter.

"We did an MRI," Bruce said staring distractedly down at some random notes on his StarkPad, avoiding Tony's eyes. "Information which we did *not* appended to the main medical report. While you can't see it to look at him, Loki seems to be a fully functional dual sexual." He scrolled idly down the screen he was blindly looking at, "Which is pretty freaking amazing actually, space aliens, go figure. But this is apparently not something common with Asgardians, the term their healer used for the condition was Yotim." He looked up at Tony. "We can't tell him either, his condition is apparently a closely guarded secret, hidden with a glamour of some sort, even from him and known only to his parents and the lady who was working on him with me."

"Really?" Okay, so not female, not really, but it totally fit in with Loki's whole schizo appearance. He raised his eyebrows and tossed a 'please, do go on' look at Bruce.

Bruce's lips thinned, "Eri had tossed her helpers out of the room before we started checking and cleaning up the rape trauma." Tony blanched as the floor dropped out from underneath him. Bruce continued in a harsher voice, "Which doubtless would have been worse if some sort of glamour didn't keep everyone from knowing about the whole dual sexual thing."

Okay now Tony felt like a deviate pervy shit. All those warm tingly feelings soured leaving a really bad taste in the back of his throat.

"What?" Bruce asked taking in Tony's stricken expression, voice and face as neutral as only years of yoga could make it. "The guy was restrained and almost beaten to death; you didn't think that was possible too?"

Well, okay. Yeah, it's possible, but honestly who thinks of stuff like that? Well obviously the vile

fuckers who did it, but still. Not normal people. Normal people don't think of stuff like that, let alone do stuff like that.

Tony swallowed down his nausea, "That's just sick Bruce," he said faintly, leaning against the island, groping for one of the stools underneath it and sitting down. Not that there weren't people who would think that Loki had only gotten what he deserved. But Tony considered them to be sick too, understandably grieving mind you, but still.

"I know it is Tony. But he's getting better and hey, it won't happen here, which is what his mom was looking for."

Tony was embarrassed about the thoughts and speculation he had been doing just a few minutes earlier, which would have never involved force. But still, what Tony had been thinking, that would have been some nice consensual fun, others had done with force and violence.

Tony shriveled inside.

"Come on Bruce," he said tiredly. Let's get Merlin down to his new room."

Sleeping Beauty

Chapter Summary

As Tony well knows, if something is going to happen... it will happen at the absolute worst time.

Chapter 6 – Sleeping Beauty

“Sir?”

“Not now Jarvis,” Tony said, his finger tracing out the wiring on a piece of Chitauri tech, trying to figure out what it had been designed for. “I only have two hours to figure this out before I have to get ready for that Senior Management meeting that Pepper roped me into.”

“Actually sir, you only have a little over an hour, but I assure you that you want to hear my news.”

Crap, he was never going to figure this out in just an hour. “Alright,” he said, rolling his eyes slightly and disgusted at having to stop. “What ya got Jarvis? Our stock slipped a point? Liam Payne just announced his undying love for Justin Timberlake? Johnny Depp wants a date? What?”

“The glow has disappeared from Mister Odinson, and he appears to be trying to wake up.” Jarvis said calmly.

“Of course he is,” huffed Tony.

Predictably, after spending months sleeping surrounded and cared for by that gentle green glow. Months of being completely and totally no maintenance and no trouble at all, again thanks again to that lovely green glow, Loki decided to wake up just when Tony would have to leave. Figures.

“Jarvis, call Pepper for me, I’m going to have to cancel this afternoon.”

“Sir, might I remind you that Ms. Potts has threatened to eviscerate you if you miss this year’s meeting.”

“Yeah, well this is an emergency, she’ll understand.”

“As I recall sir,” Jarvis retorted, “You claimed that the last three times you missed were also emergencies. She has not forgotten that one of your ‘emergencies’ was caused by you deciding to stay late at a car show.”

“Ouch. Jarvis, you hurt me. Pain, lots of it, right here.” Tony clutched dramatically at his heart.

“I don’t believe that is where Ms. Potts threatened to wound you if you missed this year sir; I believe it was about two feet lower.

Tony grimaced. “Fine, don’t call her. She would probably be all unreasonable and emotional anyhow.”

“Sir, are you sure you want to use the word emotional in any sentence that references Ms. Potts?”

“Ha. No, probably not after what happen the last time. Tell ya what Jarvis, call Bruce ask him to come over.”

OoooO

Something was missing, he thought slowly, but what? Taking another breath, Loki tried to open his eyes, but it was so hard and he was so tired. After trying again, which only resulted in his eye lashes fluttering he decided to just keep them closed and rest a minute.

Something was missing, but something was also wrong. Even with his head stuffed with wool, eyes glued shut and limbs that wouldn't move he knew something was very, very wrong.

His arms were dull, leaden things and he was amazed at the effort it took to move his fingers. The weight on his chest was his own hand; the fingers he had moved with so much effort could be felt above the thin soft material he was clothed in. Strange feeling material, thin and very soft, like the material that babes were clothed in. Also something light was over top his hands; he felt it rub on his knuckles when he moved his hand again. Concentrating harder than he would need to for a major working Loki brought his right hand up to rub his eyes, and froze when he felt cold hard metal touch his cheek and a thin cold cord drape across his neck and mostly bare shoulder. Was it metal also? Was it a restraint?

Had he been... Could he have been... Was he... a prisoner somewhere?

It started small, just a trill of terror gliding up his spine, then he shuddered hard, the movement jarring sore muscles and within an instant he was shaking, every part of him was shaking, shaking so hard he couldn't breathe.

He had to find out. Arms trembling he brought his hands together, one unsteady hand covering the other as his fingers mapped out the cold metal cuff. Shakily his fingers danced on its surface, finding no hinge or hasp or lock, only a long hard cord of some kind that just felt like it was fused into the cuff.

Desperate to see, Loki's hands ghosted up to his face, rubbing at his eyes, trying to help them to open. Finally after what seemed like a year of trying, his eyes opened, and almost immediately closed, but not before he caught a fuzzy glimpse of a green healing haze surrounding him, which flickered away as he looked at it.

As the green haze disappeared he was shocked to hear a voice beside him.

“So, Sleeping Beauty, I see you finally decided to wake up huh?”

Every muscle in his body contracted as a cold, mocking voice washed over him. Somehow he found himself sitting up, wedged in a corner, a cool hard surface at his back as he blinked rapidly, trying to focus on the figure standing over him, trying to stop shaking.

The creature looming over him had brown eyes, cropped brown hair and a short matching beard trimmed much like Fandral's, but he was far too short to be an Asgardian, not stocky enough to be a dwarf and his face was squarer than any elf Loki had ever met in Álfheimr. Male, he was definitely a male, behind him was an opening of some sort, possibly a door beyond it, glass or crystal by the look of it.

“Hey, calm down okay?” The man huffed in mild amusement at his distress. “It's me, Tony Stark? Iron Man? Remember me?”

Loki's eyes snapped up and held the brown ones above him, his brows knitted in thought,

Midgardian? Yes, Midgardian, it had to be. Loki might be shaky and just woken from a healing sleep with no restorative draught, but even in his weakened state he could take a single mortal with no trouble at all.

Watching the mortal named Stark from the corner of his eye, Loki slid to the side of the bed he was on, and slipped his legs down to the floor. He was shaky, but by leaning his back against the wall he could move towards the door. He felt a slight tension on his wrist and looked at the cuff. How had he had forgotten about it? Surely the cord was longer than it had been a minute ago.

Loki jerked his arm to get pull slack, but the cord didn't move. Alarmed, he looked at where it was attached to the wall. Why? It had moved before, Loki leaned back slowly to see how much tension it would resist, but this time it gave way like it had at first. He jerked his arm and it held firm. So... if he moved his hand slowly, the cord moved with him, granting him more movement, rather than holding him in one area. If he jerked it, like he was going try and yank it out of the wall it locked into place and didn't permit him to move.

"So, bathroom?" The Midgardian named Stark said. "Sure. Okay, just be careful getting in there; let me know if you need a hand."

The brown haired mortal actually moved towards the bed like he wanted to help, trailing behind him with one of his arms slightly raised almost touching his un-cuffed arm, but most importantly, leaving Loki's path to the door open. The instant he was at the entry to the bathing room, Loki slid past it, smoothly extending his wrist in front of him to gain more slack in the cord as he glided through the nearby antechamber towards the cell door. The walls of his cell were clear, he didn't see anyone else within sight of the cell, strangely the brown haired man was alone.

"Hey. Stop. You don't need to go there," the surprised Stark yelped, hurrying behind him and grabbing his arm. "You need to stay in here. Look just go do your business, freshen up and then go sit down, we'll talk then okay?"

Loki tried to pull his arm away, but the mortal wouldn't let go and seemed to be surprisingly strong, much stronger than Loki thought a mortal should be. Even in his weakened state Loki should have been able to easily break the man's hold on his arm.

But he couldn't. Not only that, but the mortal's other arm grabbed Loki's thin shirt and he was actually dragging him away from the door!

The mortal Stark was trying to drag him back, Loki was trying to stay by the door, he grabbed the man's shirt and spun him around.

"Jarvis reel him in," the mortal called out. "Get him back to bed."

As he spun Stark around, Loki had to duck out from under the cord, to keep it from becoming entangled as they grappled with each other.

The cord started gently tugging him back towards the bed, but as he and the other man fought, all that really happened was that the shorter man became surrounded by loops of the metal cord and the cord began to tighten as it tugged both him and the yelling mortal away from the door.

Frantic and breathing heavily, Loki wrapped his arms around the man dragging them both to the floor so he could brace his feet the interior door's frame.

"Ow!"

"Damn it Loki that hurt," the brown haired man yelled as they fell, eyes snapping in anger. "What

the hell do you think you're doing?"

Loki's legs strained against the door frame and his arms tightened around the trussed up mortal as the cord tried to tow them both back into the other room. Loki desperately hoped this would give him enough leverage to keep the cable from dragging him back into the cell before other guards were made aware of the disturbance and came to help.

Right now all Loki could hope for is that this Stark person had the key to open the cuffs, here before they were yanked back any further. Loki had no intention of allowing the metal cord to get as short as it had been when he had first woke up. If that happened he would be trapped without any room to maneuver.

"Stop. Jarvis stop! Stop! The cable is tightening around me!" The dark haired man yelled. "Where's Banner?"

"How do I open this cuff mortal?" Loki growled into his ear, voice harsh with anger and disuse.

"Sir, Doctor Banner is in the elevator, he is headed towards the medical wing, and he will be here as quickly as he can," Said Jarvis. "Sir, shall I alert S.H.I.E.L.D.?"

"Loki, you can't. It won't open for you. Just relax and let's go back in there, you sit down and we'll talk about what's happening. Jarvis tell Banner forget the medical wing and just get up here!"

"Shall I alert S.H.I.E.L.D.?"

"Fuck S.H.I.E.L.D.!" Tony screamed "Tell Banner to get his ass here now and give me some slack on this damn cable!"

Knowing that someone else was coming and that his time was growing shorter, Loki took a chance, hoping that he could hold Stark with just the cord and his cuffed hand. He brought his free arm up around his captor's neck and squeezed. He just wished the fuzzy feeling in his head would clear up enough for him to use his magic, so he wouldn't have to resort to such crude methods of persuasion. Physical violence was more Thor's style than his.

"I want this cuff off, and I want it off now!" Loki hissed as his arm tightened cruelly against the man's neck, even as he slid them both backward taking advantage of the extra cable to get closer to the exterior door. He squeezed the man's neck tighter, more than enough to let him know he meant business. "I might not be able to open this cuff, but you better hope you can or I'm going to break your neck."

"You don't want to do that, look just--" His voice cut off momentarily as Loki gave him a hard, quick warning squeeze. Something was wrong, something was majorly wrong. Loki was far weaker than he should be, but he was strong enough to snap a neck if he so desired.

"Jarvis open the cuff now." Stark called in a strangled raspy voice as Loki eased up on his throat.

With the way the blood was pounding in his ears, Loki was not surprised that he couldn't hear the cuff click open, but he did feel it loosening. Stripping it off his wrist, he twisted the attached cord once around Stark's neck and then wrapped it securely around one of the cord loops that already encircled the angry struggling man.

While Loki didn't hear anything, Stark apparently noticed some movement, Loki followed his gaze in time to see a door slide shut on the far wall and another Midgardian man running towards the cell.

“Sir, protocol is the outer door doesn’t open while the prisoner is not secure and the inner door is open.” The voice said urgently.

“Just do it! Fuck protocol Jarv--” Loki clapped his hand over the man’s mouth so he couldn’t give any more orders or warn the approaching man that Loki was no longer cuffed to the wall.

Stark rolled angry eyes up and glared at Loki, his screams muffled by Loki’s hand, struggling furiously as he tried to break free from his grasp. Despite the man’s struggles, Loki managed to get to his feet and without taking his hand from Stark’s mouth he crab crawled, dragging the man with him as close as he could get towards the door. Not facing it, but rather placing it on his right and watching it from the corner of his eye. A brief pat down of Stark didn’t find a weapon on the short man, and this worried Loki. Where they so confident that Loki couldn’t escape that the guards didn’t even bother to carry weapons?

The other mortal had made it to the outer door, as it slid open Loki stood up, jerking his captive up also and shoving him hard towards the opposite side of the entry chamber. As he hoped, this distracted the man entering, who made an involuntary grab to try and prevent the trussed up mortal from falling. He wasn’t fast enough to switch directions before Loki surged past him using his elbow to hit the new jailor hard in the small of the back, pitching him forward on top of the brown haired man. Loki sprinted out the door before it could finish closing. Both men were screaming in pain and calling his name as the door slid shut, momentarily muffling their cries.

Breathing heavily, clutching his hand to his side, Loki sprinted as fast as he could towards the large metal doors, they had no handles, but there was a button, which he pushed. Not that it did him any good, either the doors won’t open for prisoners or if they do open, it will take too long be of use to Loki. Stumbling along the wall looking for a door, a window that will open he came across a different door, smaller and very plain with a bar across it that doesn’t lift, after he desperately bounced up against the door in aggravation trying to see if he could force it open, his hip hit the bar and it pushed in with the click of a latch releasing. A sign above the door is illuminated and it proclaims that this door is an EXIT.

So Loki does. He is not sure what the word means, but the door did open...

Where'd he go?

Chapter Summary

Bruce's control is sorely tested.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 101,000 words so far

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 7 – Where'd he go?

Tony is starting to lose patience. Yes Loki looks like he is waking up, and yes the green healing glow thing keeps flickering on and off, but he's been standing here for half an hour, watching, and so far all the broken god has done is blink and turn his head from side to side. If he doesn't wake up soon, Tony is going to be major late for his meeting, which thank heavens, is only an elevator ride away, but still, he'll be late and Pepper will be livid.

At almost the end of Tony's admittedly limited patience, the glow disappears and doesn't come back. Sleeping Beauty's eyes finally open and Tony is confused to be looking into a pair of dark green eyes rather than the bright blue ones he remembers from the last time the god was here. Where the fuck did those come from? For that matter, looking at him even in the beginnings of a panic, the god looks much younger than he did before.

And upset, really, really upset as he slid off the bed towards the bathroom. Tony tried to follow behind the god close enough to help if he felt wobbly but he was caught off guard when this first movement was not a potty run but actually an escape attempt.

"Hey. Stop. You don't need to go there," he called out grabbing at Loki's arm. "You need to stay in here. Look just go do your business, freshen up and then go sit down, we'll talk then okay?"

Loki tried to pull his arm away from Tony, but seemed really surprised that he couldn't.

Okay, that was funny.

Tony couldn't wait to see the face he made when he found out that he was not only bereft of his godly strength but also his bibbity bobbity boo. But still, the bastard had just got out of bed for the first time in weeks and Bruce was going to be major pissed if he didn't get him back to bed so he

began towing the god back to bed.

What the--

“Jarvis reel him in,” Tony called out. “Get him back to bed.”

And that was when all hell broke loose. Crazy god started spinning him around trying to wind him up in the cable and then when he got Jarvis to start towing him back to bed, Tony found out he was wrapped up in the cable, no *trying* about it. And then he was on the floor and then he had a maniac god who had just got out of his sick bed thank you very much trying to choke him and threatening him and throwing him all over the damn place!

I really should have left the bastard alone and gone to my damn meeting.

“Tony, my god. Tony are you okay,” Bruce asked urgently, trying to unwrap the handcuff and get the cable that was cutting into his neck off of Tony.

It was all Tony could do not to scream at him, fuck **no** he wasn’t all right. He just been dropped on his face, taking a nasty crack to the side of his head, not to mention jarring his shoulder, he had a freaking cable cutting into his arm and the side of his neck, his knee was killing him and... the whip cream on his shit sundae was the son of a bitching bane of his freaking existence was now roaming free in his tower.

“Jarvis, where the fuck is he?” he growled brushing off Bruce’s hands.

“I was able to override the elevator door sir, but he used the emergency exit, and is heading up the stairs.”

Unlooping the last bit of cable, Bruce helped Tony to his feet. “How’d he get in the stair well Jarvis, isn’t that locked?”

“Unfortunately, Doctor Banner, even Stark Towers is not allowed to restrict entry to the emergency stairs, but without a code for reentry or me overriding the locks the doors will only open to the roof or the lower lobby exit.” Jarvis said apologetically. “He’s heading up to the roof sir.”

“Jarvis, open the elevator,” Tony called, grabbing Bruce’s arm and hustling him along. “Keep an eye on him; let me know if he changes direction okay?”

“Of course sir, he is on the last set of stairs before the roof exit and appears to be very winded.”

Winded or not, Loki must have been still making time since the stairwell door had already swung shut with no godling in sight when they got there.

“Where did he go?” Bruce asked looking around, seeing planters, benches and seating groups but no recently awoken god of mischief.

“Heimdall!”

Tony motioned for Bruce to go the other way before he darted around the small structure that housed the stairwell. Several yards away he saw Loki standing on a chest high garden wall that separated the patio and garden from the building’s mechanicals.

“Heimdall open the Bi-Frost!” The god screamed, voice raspy from disuse, hands fisted tight, almost vibrating with tension as he stared up into the afternoon sky.

“Heimdall, please open the Bi-Frost now!” Loki pleaded. “Heimdall!”

“Loki,” Tony yelled, “Come on, get down here. I can explain everything.”

All the rage and sorrow that had been a moment ago concentrated on the autumn sky was abruptly re-focused on Tony.

Somewhere there is a manual that tells you when an angry ex-god is screaming, the worst thing you can do is draw attention to yourself. Tony makes a mental note to have Jarvis find him a copy.

Assuming Tony survives the next ten minutes or so.

Loki threw his hands up in a classic ‘Magic Casting Pose Six’, his eyes narrowed and his look became even more intense as he flipped his hands into a ‘Merlin Pose Twelve’.

Nothing happened.

Tony would be lying if he said he hadn’t been just a touch concerned, but Loki is stunned.

Loki was staring at his hands so shocked, that they will have to put a new definition of the word in the dictionary just to do justice to the way he looked.

“Dude, you got no magic. Please just come back in side. I really think we need to talk.” Tony called in what he liked to think of as his best ‘soothing crazy’ voice.

“What did you do to me?” Loki’s snarled voice low and guttural with a back ground note of pleading, green eyes darkened almost black in rage before they locked onto Tony’s brown ones. “What. Did. You. Do?!”

“Jarvis....” Tony called, concern making his voice a lot higher pitched than it normally was. “Send me a suit Jarv.”

“Now! Jarvis, send it now!”

Three leaping steps were all it took for Loki to get to the end of the wall before he launched himself at Tony.

Tony knew he was fucked. It didn’t matter that Loki had had his magic and strength bound. It didn’t matter that he had been a wobbly mess not fifteen minutes ago. Even as a mortal Loki still had access to centuries of training in hand to hand combat. Loki had the high ground, Loki had rage and Loki had adrenaline, lots and lots of adrenaline.

What Tony had was a six foot three maniac grabbing Tony’s shoulders as he was thrown backwards by Loki’s weight and momentum. A extremely furious six foot plus maniac who had no problem at all with driving a knee into Tony’s gut as they fell and then grabbing a handful of brown hair and bouncing Tony’s head backwards, several times.

Hard.

What Tony now had was a splitting headache, blurry vision and a chance to breathe as Loki was abruptly pulled off of him by Bruce.

“komdu þér burt frá mér, föðurlausa afstyrmi!***” Loki snarled.

“Look, just don’t hit me. You don’t want me to get mad. Trust me, you just don’t.” Tony could hear Bruce frantically telling their escaped prisoner. Or rather ‘Tony’s’ escaped prisoner, since his

contract with Queen Momma Frigga did have a no transfer and no share clause.

Tony heard the sound of a really solid body blow.

“Oooofff.” Gaspd the doctor, somewhere unseen beside Tony.

Tony loved Bruce. He loved him in a bromantic way as deeply as only the sudden return of air to one’s body could achieve. And when next he could move, he was going to hug the big lug... and maybe order him a new car.

But right now it was all he could do to roll on his side, breathe shallowly and watch Loki slapping several kinds of hell out of the bespectacled scientist.

Or un-bespectacled scientist, since Bruce’s glasses had just gone flying fuck knows where.

While Bruce was probably not enjoying getting the crap beat out of him, it was really a lot more damage that Tony had ever seen Bruce experience without at least starting to Hulk out. As scientifically interesting as this was as a test for Bruce’s Asgardian pendant, Tony decided he needed to try and stand to be ready when his suit arrived.

“How did you get that?” Loki yelled, Bruce’s ripped shirt allowing him to catch a glimpse of Frigga’s pendant.

Without waiting for an answer he snatched at the front of Bruce’s shirt drawing him closer. “That belongs to my mother!”

“Loki, calm down. Your mom gave it to me!” Bruce gasped, grabbing Loki’s wrists and trying to pry them off his shirt.

“Liar!” He screamed, pulling him closer until he and Bruce were almost nose to nose. “You lie vilely, where is she? What happened to her?!” the Asgardian twisted one of the hands he had fisted into Bruce’s shirt for a tighter grip and then wrenching his other hand out of Bruce’s grip he snatched the pendant, the solid chain eventually snapping after he jerked on it one more time.

Twirling his hand to wrap the loose chain around it, Loki punched Bruce twice in the stomach with his chain wrapped fist as he unwrapped his other hand from Bruce’s shirt and jumped backwards.

“Anytime now Jarvis!” Tony screamed, scrambling to his feet and stretching his arms out at their full extension.

Breathing heavily, Bruce stumbled towards Loki, hand outstretched, grabbing the front of his tank top. “I... Need that... Loki... Give it back... His features contorted, the pain of holding back the beast dropping him to his knees dragging the trickster towards him.

Fortunately, Loki was concentrating on trying to break the hold Bruce had on him when Tony’s suit finally arrived and started snapping around him. But Tony wasn’t sure if the distraction was worth Loki bringing both fists down on Bruce’s shoulders.

“She gave it to... me... to keep... you safe...” Gasping, Bruce took hold of Loki’s pant leg with his other hand as he began to curl in pain. “You don’t want to... see me... change...”

Bruce’s tortured face lifted shakily, an angry green tinge washed over his eyes and rippled briefly across his face as the doctor fought to retain control.

“Got ya!” Tony yelped reaching around the god and clamping gauntleted fingers over each of

Loki's wrists. "Drop it now," he commanded squeezing as hard as he dared with the powered gloves.

While he didn't want to crush the bones in Loki's wrists, Tony deemed that to be a lesser risk than unleashing the Hulk on his building. Yeah he could snatch the irritating god and fly high enough that Bruce couldn't reach them, but that would still leave an angry Hulk on a building full of his work, his home and numerous lower floors of Stark International employees.

Loki howled, perhaps in frustration, perhaps in pain, most likely in both.

"DROP IT!" Tony screamed in his ear, his voice amplified by the suits speakers. He tightened his grip a bit more until the pendant dropped to the deck.

Throwing the trouble maker into a grouping of modern-style patio furniture, Tony scrambled for the pendant being careful not to crush or damage it. "Hang on Brucie," Tony begged palming the jewel as best he could with the unwieldy gauntlets and holding it flush against Bruce's heaving chest.

"No Tony... Get away... I can't hold him..." Bruce sobbed, weakly trying to push Tony's arm away as his skin heaved and twisted, green washing over him and then away as he fought for control of his body.

OoooO

(*"*Komast í burtu frá mér þér munaðarleysingja hrogn'komdu þér burt frá mér, föðurlausa afstyrmi!*" Loki snarled. - "*Get away from me you fatherless spawn!*" Loki snarled)

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Bruce is upset

Chapter Summary

Bruce is upset, Tony is jubilant and Loki misses story time.

Chapter 8 - Bruce is upset

“Tony, you need to leave!” Bruce moaned.

“Can’t do that buddy.” Tony said, trying to soothe his friend, but prudently shifting so he was standing behind Bruce with his arm over the distressed man’s shoulder still holding the pendant to his skin of his chest.

“Tony....”

“Shhhh, Bruce. It’s alright. Shhhh. It’s going to be fine.” Tony whispered to his friend trying not to tear up behind his mask at the heartbreakingly fearful look that Bruce threw over his shoulder, as he feebly motioned for Tony to leave him.

It took less than a minute, and Tony could already see the changes. “Jarvis, make sure we save this,” Tony whispered to his AI.

Taking several deep breaths, Bruce’s own hand shakily rose, to cover the gauntlet. “I got it Tony,” he croaked.

Tony let Bruce slide his hand under the suit’s gauntlet to hold the pendant. When he was sure that Bruce was in control, Tony let go and stood in front of him, flipping up his visor so Bruce could see Tony’s wide happy grin.

Bruce huffed, tipping the corners of his mouth up at Tony’s obvious delight. “Tony, go check on Loki, I think you might have hurt him when you tossed him across the deck.”

“Pfft. Like I care,” Tony scoffed; relieved to see Bruce’s eye and skin color had returned to normal and his muscles had relaxed back to his non-hulk state. “Look at you man!”

Bruce yanked his ruined shirt together, tucking it into his un-Hulk-shredded pants to keep it closed.

“Dude, it so works. You know what that means don’t you?” Tony crowed, holding out a hand to help Bruce stand.

“Yeah. I do,” Bruce said accepting the assist and standing. “It means I can take the subway without worrying about getting mad and accidentally killing anyone.”

Tony cackled, “Fuck that Brucie. What it means is your ass can start getting laid again. Ain’t no orgasm in the world more stressful than having a six foot three homicidal maniac trying to take you out.”

“Funny Tony, really funny.” One hand still holding the pendant to his chest and the other rubbing his bruised forehead, Bruce waved Tony away, “You. Go check on Bag-of-Cats.”

Even though he didn't really want to, Tony went over to make sure he hadn't actually killed his resident god. Loki had knocked over a few chairs and slid to stop partially underneath a large round heavy table. Unfortunately for him, none of the chair cushions had landed under the unconscious trickster. Tony plucked up the two cushions that were actually lying on the god, tossing them to the side as Bruce came up beside him.

"You know," Tony observed calmly, "evil wanna be dictators look so cute when they're sleeping."

"If you say so Tony, but I for one would rather they look cute secured in their cell."

"Ooo Kinky... But true enough I suppose," Tony agreed. Thinking for a minute if he just wanted to pick the god up with the suit or let him retain a smidge of dignity and walk back down under his own power. In the end he decided that the iron man suit was already unwieldy using elevators and would be worse with a whopping big deity slung over one shoulder.

"Well let's get this taken care of before he comes around. Bruce let me borrow your belt okay?"

Using Bruce's woven belt, Tony noosed the belt over one ankle and then leaving some slack in between; he wrapped and tucked it around the other, creating a crude hobble that should slow crazy brain down bit if he decided to do another runner.

"I think it's a good look for him," he said turning to Bruce. "What do you think?"

Bruce was cradling his pendant in both hands. "I think I want us to make some sort of holder or chain for this so the pendant touches my skin, but it won't be easily seen or snatched." He frowned and thought a moment more, "Or scratched, or bumped, or--"

"I get the idea Bruce. It won't be a problem; we'll come up with something to keep it secure." Tony assured him as he nudged the fallen god with his metal covered foot.

They stood there a few minutes, Bruce taking a handkerchief out of his pocket and nestling the pendant in it before enfolding the pendant in the soft cloth and slipping it deep in his pocket for safety.

Tony just watched as Loki several times tried to lift his head and open his eyes.

After a fairly decent effort, but not before Bruce had found his glasses, the god actually was able to roll on his side.

Loki groaned and managed to push himself up into a sitting position, but Tony could see he was still not really with them. Loki's head was lolling and he kept trying to hold his eyes open and not really succeeding.

"Loki, hey. Can you hear me okay?" Bruce asked softly as he crouched down and brushed the long hair back out of the god's face. Loki finally managed to get his eyes to stay open. He held his hand up and regarded the deep bruises and a shallow cut that had been left by the Tony's gauntlet with deep dismay. He then held up the other, made a few gestures which did exactly nothing, before folding both hands to his chest, holding himself in a panicky kind of way.

Bruce leaned in to take a good look at the god's pupils. Startled, Loki tried to scramble back, and for the first moment his expression was equal parts of confusion at Bruce's closeness and alarm that he was restrained. But Tony could tell the moment he put it all together. Confused and alarmed Loki disappeared as his features sharpened; he glared at them with narrow green slits of malice as

his hands dove down to his ankles, fingers flying trying to get the belt loose.

“Heimdall!” Loki screamed, tugging at the restraint. “Heimdall open the Bi-Frost!”

“Hey, hey. None of that!” Tony admonished pushing Loki’s hands away from the hobble.

“How dare you lay hands upon a Prince of Asgard!” Loki spat, snaking his hands back again to the belt. “My father will have you flayed for this.”

Tony reached down grabbing Loki by the upper arms and jerking him upright. If he bruised the guy a bit more, Tony would be hard pressed to give a fuck.

Which is when Loki lost it. “Heimdall!”

Despite being just up from a sick bed, Tony had to admit that Loki was making a really creditable effort to break free. Tony was just about to begrudgingly admire what the god was able to do with only adrenaline at this point, when Loki took advantage of the hold Tony had and swung his feet up to slam them against Tony’s chest plate.

“Heimdall! Heimdall tell father!”

Shaking him lightly to get his attention, Tony yelled. “Look you, you don’t have god like strength, you don’t have any freaking magic, what you have is one last chance to behave and do what you’re told before I totally go postal on your ass.

Tony shook the god roughly, “Do you understand? Behave.”

OoooO

“Okay Bambi, here it is, short and sweet because otherwise Pepper is going to kill me” He waved a hand at Bruce indicating that he needed to hurry and finish examining Loki’s condition. “Anyhow, much as I would love to stay and chat, answer your questions and all that, I have a meeting to get to and I am already... How late Jarvis?”

“Thirty seven minutes sir. Ms. Potts is not looking too pleased.”

“Yeah. Okay.” Tony scrubbed a hand against his eyes tiredly, “Thanks Jarv, tell her I’ll be there in ten minutes, fifteen at the latest. Have Dummy meet me in the elevator with a clean shirt, that will save me a few minutes.”

He glared at Bruce, whose face had wrinkled up in an attempt not to laugh and then fixed Loki with a stern look.

“Anyhow, you wasted all your time to ask questions by trying to beat the crap out of us and escaping and all that. So here it is. Your mother, who was fine last time I saw her, other than being worried about you that is, gave that pendant to Bruce.” He fixed Loki with a baleful eye. “DO NOT ever try to take it off him again. I will show you some vids later so you understand how important that is, without it he turns into a...” Tony cast around, looking for a polite way to express the essence of the Hulk while Bruce was standing right in beside him.

“Enormous green rage monster?” Bruce suggested with a sly glance and a smirk in his voice.

Tony grinned. “Well, I was going to say giant berserker, but hey we can go with that.”

Tony’s expression became more serious. “Anyhow, your mom was concerned that you might

somehow piss Brucie here off and he would pound you into the ground. Which you can't survive in your current state I might remind you. Anyhow, within minutes of meeting him you did piss him off, so there might be something to that 'scrying the future' thing she is supposed to be able to do."

"Why would my mother--" Loki snarled.

"Hush you." Tony commanded giving a shake to the arm he was restraining for Bruce. "As I said, we don't have time for questions and answers right now, so you don't get to talk, all you get to do is listen. I'm going to run through this quick and we'll chat later." Tony took a deep breath. "You were in prison, it wasn't safe for you to stay in fairy land, your mom brought you here for me to keep you safely confined, feed you, clothe you, give you medical attention as needed and supply you with books and writing implements etcetera, etcetera." He fixed a gimlet stare on the godling, "for so long as you behave and don't cause me any grief.

Now I understand that you are a bit freaked out, and since you didn't know what was going on and no one was really hurt, I'm going to give you a pass on what just happened. But don't you ever try shit like that again. Next time your wrist won't be sore and bruised, it will be crushed to pulp. Understand?"

Loki's eyes widened and Tony didn't think it would not have been possible for him to look more frightened, lost or confused if he had tried. And if wasn't for the bruises and contusions that he had from the annoying little shit, he might have felt bad for him.

"Bruce? Damage? What's next?"

"Well nothing that won't hold a few hours," Bruce said slowly, eyes fastened on his patient. "I'd like to do a more detailed examine this evening when you get done with your meeting. I would say a liquid lunch now and if he holds that down, maybe something soft and light for a late dinner." He peered down in Loki's eyes once more, flashing them with the small pen light he held. "Doesn't appear to have a concussion, but I would recommend he rest until I get a chance to look at him again."

"Right. Good. Stay put Dasher and Jarvis will send Lunch down as soon as possible. Got that Jarvis?"

"Yes sir, I will order a tray from the cafeteria immediately. Sir, the time..."

"Yeah Jarv, I'm on it." Tony patted the arm he had been holding as gently as he could with gauntlets on and then nudged Bruce. "We need to go. Now. See ya in a couple of hours."

Waving Bruce to go ahead of him, Tony turned and grinned as he made it to the door and it started sliding shut, "Now you stay right here and be a good boy and daddy will come back and read you a story before bedtime. 'Kay?"

As the now frosted door slid shut Tony heard an outraged gasp and a pair of livid green eyes disappeared from view.

Meeting Pepper

Chapter Summary

Angst and an emergency, all in a day's work actually when you were the CEO of Stark Industries.

Chapter Notes

As a reminder, this Loki is fundamentally younger than even what we saw in the first movie. While he has been dealing with crap from Asgard due to him being second prince, magic user, knife and staff fighter... ect... Mentally he has had a reset.

He has not yet snapped and decided to do anything like allow Jotun's into Asgard, suffered the trauma from going to Jotunheim, the weapons vault drama and of course the Chitauri visit. So he is working with a younger mindset, one that has not had it's faith in his family shattered.

I have reworked this chapter like a zillion times. It refuses to get any better. Sucks but I just have to move on or I'll never finish. Please enjoy it, for a certain value of enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 9 – Meeting Pepper

Tony Stark was an infuriating, ill-mannered bastard as far as Loki was concerned. It had been several weeks since Loki had woken up and first seen the man, and nothing had happened to change his opinion of the irritating Midgardian.

The day he had woken from the healing sleep had not gone well. Loki was ashamed to admit that he had panicked and frankly things had gone downhill from that. He was still at a loss to explain why he had been so scared, why he had immediately responded with flight and fight without really taking a second to think rationally. It is not like Loki had never been detained before by forces hostile to Asgard, but for some reason, this time he couldn't make himself think, this time he had felt raw terror clawing it way into his belly and wrapping around his heart and his mind, which had never failed him in the past, just shut down. For the first time in his life, in a situation that was not immediate peril his mind had shutdown, and for no reason, the man Stark had not been threatening him; there had not even been a whip in sight.

And why was he even worried about a whip? It wasn't even a very practical method of controlling a prisoner. Punishing one yes, but in the limited space of a cell, it was unlikely to be used to control. Never had a whip been used on Loki, even when even he would have admitted he deserved it for some of the mischief he had caused through the years, and yet... The thought of a whip... The mere thought was enough to make him shiver uncontrollably and cause his heart to contract painfully.

At any rate, he had been detained before and he had waited, watching, learning and eventually

bargaining his way out of confinement or figuring out a way to escape. This time he ran, without thinking, he Loki Odinson had ran like a child seeking safety after discovering a Frost Giant under their bed.

And that was perhaps more terrifying than being imprisoned. Seldom had his ability to wait and look for an advantage failed him. The last time it had happened, he had still been a youngling. Granted on the verge of adulthood, but a youngling none the less. But this time he had felt like such a deep fear, fear of the unknown, fear of being restrained, a fear of monsters lurking in the dark waiting, so he didn't think, he didn't reason, he just ran like a frightened child

Loki felt almost a physical pain at the thought of monsters. There had been a monster in the room, the healer named Bruce Banner turned into a huge green monster when angry. Feeling dizzy, Loki sat on the edge of the small metal bed. Stark had a rectangle of glass Midgard used to display recordings, he had returned several hours after Loki's pathetic escape attempt and had showed him images of Banner as an uncontrolled monster. Banner's berserker was bigger than the largest Asgardian Warrior; it was as large as Frost Giants were reputed to be. In his current vulnerable state, Banner would be able to break him like a twig. Loki had not felt so helpless since he was a very young child.

Shivering he pulled the blanket up from the bottom of the bed, draping it across his shoulders he wedged himself into the corner, tucking his cold feet underneath him and wrapping the blanket tightly around himself. He tucked his hands underneath his arm, partially for warmth, partially for self-comfort but mainly to avoid looking at the healing cut still visible on the back of one of them. Banner had washed and bandaged his cuts that night. But Stark had spoken the truth; Loki no longer had his magic or his Æsir form. His current body seemed to be no different than that of the Midgardian Stark, his Æsir strength and healing abilities were gone. No wonder he had been recaptured so easily.

Loki's heart began pounding harder and harder, making his chest feel like it was shrinking, like it was growing smaller and squeezing his heart in a fist, making it harder and harder for it to beat properly. He felt dizzy and weak and ill, his head and his heart both hurt. A thrill of horror shot through him, was he totally mortal now? Was he... dying?

Dying? He could very well be, mortals didn't heal correctly and they lived pitifully short lives. Very short, very fragile lives. Every day could be bringing him closer and closer to death.

He felt sweat break out on his temples as an icy shiver raced down his back. Mortal? How was it even possible? His head ached as if a band was tightening and constricting across his skull just as it was constricting across his chest.

His mother knew he was here.

Trying to catch his breath, Loki didn't even register the gasping sounds he was making. His chest felt like Mjölfnir was sitting on it.

Why would his think that pain felt like Mjölfnir holding him down?

The beast wore a pendant on his chest that restricted his shape shifting.

A pendant that Loki's mother had given to him.

He was shaking so hard his bones hurt. He would have given anything to be able to tell himself that Stark lied. But Loki had spent too many years at court ferreting out the lies of others not to know when someone was doing it to him. He fell over on the bed with a strangled sob. He had been in

prison in Asgard. For what? No matter how hard he tried to remember why he had been in prison he couldn't remember anything. All he could come up with was a fear of pain and monsters.

Stark told him that it wasn't safe for him to stay in a prison in Asgard.

His mother brought him here.

What did he do that was so heinous that even the memory of it was ripped from his mind, leaving only a crippling unknowing fear behind?

His mother knew about it. Stark had shown him the contract with her signature.

Loki's eyes were open, you shouldn't be able to see sound he knew, but somehow he could. His breathing was restricted to short shallow breaths so many black spots were dancing in front of him that he couldn't see the other side of his cell anymore. Sound faded and then became painfully, glitteringly sharp.

Heimdall wouldn't answer his call and his mother knew he was here.

He was alone, defenseless, caged and dying. And worse than all of that, the one person he thought he could always count on had abandoned him helpless and at the mercy of his enemies.

There was only one person in all the realms that Loki had been sure loved him. And now he knew for sure that she didn't.

A black whirlpool opened up beneath Loki and sucked him down to drown.

OoooO

Bam!

"Loki!"

Bam!

"Loki can you hear me?!"

Bam! Bam! BAM!

"LOKI!"

"Jarvis, open this damn door!"

"Ms. Potts, it could be very dangerous to go in there."

"Jarvis, I am going to get very dangerous if you don't open this damn door right now! Call and see if Bruce is available, but you open this door right now!"

Sound was stabbing into his eyes. Loki flinched painfully, his hands shaking and twitching uncontrollably as sounds that had been distant grew louder and almost excruciatingly sharp and then became muffled in turn. Waves of sound made him nauseous, senses tangled, alternately confused and fading then compensating and blinding. Dimly he could feel his body shaking, cracking and arching uncontrollably until he felt like he was going to shatter in to hundreds of sharp shards.

"Oh hell Jarvis! Is he having a heart attack!?"

“I believe it is another anxiety attack Ms. Potts. Mister Odinson seems to be prone to them.”

“Another? Jarvis how often does he have them?”

“Two to three times a week. This seems to be one of the mild ones.”

“Oh my god! Does Tony know?”

“I alert Mister Stark during every occurrence. He has ordered me to monitor the situation and instructed me to let him know if the sensors indicate that he is going into something else immediately life threatening. If so, I am instructed to call him and Doctor Banner or Mister Stark’s personal physician if Doctor Banner is not available.”

“Are you serious Jarvis?” The female voice asked angrily.

Any interest Loki had in their conversation, which had been small to start with, vanished as he felt hot bile rise up in his throat. Heaving, he struggled to turn onto his side. The hot tears leaking from the corner of his eyes, running unheeded into the hair at his temples were the least of his worries. Somewhere in the back of his mind some part of him was screaming that he needed to turn if he didn’t want to choke again. Painful, racking shudders that seemed to catch in his chest intensified until he was spewing, with painful force everything he had eaten that day.

His heaving finally receded and he found that he had made it not only onto his side, but by a stroke of luck his head was hanging over the edge of the bed. A cold damp towel began wiping his face clear and then he was helped into a semi-sitting position and encouraged to sip from a glass of cool water that was placed to his lips. Swallowing triggered a very bad moment, but was able to fight down his gag reflex and keep from heaving water immediately back up.

“Than’ you,” he said weakly lying back down with the wall solid and sure at his back. “Most... kind.” He murmured as a soft hand stoked his wet hair back away from his face before he slipped down again into the darkness.

OoooO

“Loki,” called a low rumbling voice.

Warm hands patted his cheek, “Come on sport. I need you to wake up a little bit. Can you do that for me?”

Rolling his head away from the hand was an exercise in pain. Loki bit back a groan, he felt as if he had been beaten. Just moving his head had made muscles in his jaw, neck, shoulders and even upper arms protest. He opened his eyes to have them almost immediately droop half closed.

A hand gently turned his head back towards the speaker and his one eyelid was lifted and a light was flicked across his pupil. “Hey. Can you wake up a bit more for me?” the voice asked.

With only a bit of difficulty, he managed to focus on the speaker. Banner. The monster. Marvelous. He tried focusing again and was rewarded for a moment with a view of a slender woman with reddish blonde hair standing beside Banner before his eyes slid shut again.

“No.” The hand was back patting his face. “You need to wake up a bit; I need to talk to you okay.”

Irritated, Loki huffed and pushed the hands away, before letting his own collapse on his chest, with an annoyed mumble, the cuff and cable cool through the thin material of his tank top. He was so tired, he wanted to sleep and never wake up.

It was a cold wet wash cloth, again being pressed against his forehead, cheeks and neck that finally brought him a moment of clarity.

Blinking water out of his eye, Loki frowned at the healer, but before he could speak his displeasure the man smiled and said, “Better, that’s much better.” Not that Loki would have agreed with him.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that Banner had drawn his chair over and was seated beside the bed, he handed the washcloth to the lady beside him, taking from her a glass with a straw in it.

“I want you to take a few sips of this to help soothe your throat,” Banner said putting the straw to his lips. “Swish it around a bit, it will help rinse your mouth out and make you feel better.

Moving his head away from the straw Loki croaked, “What?”

“Just take a few sips rinse your mouth and swallow it, you’ll feel better.”

Frowning at Banner, he took a deep breath and asked again in a raspy voice, “What is it?”

“Oh.” The healer chuckled, “Just some Ginger Ale,” Loki’s frown deepened and so he elaborated.

“A beverage with a bit of ginger root in it, Reed’s Ginger Ale as a matter of fact. It’s normally served cold and bubbly, but room temperature and flat works better for right now, it’s something light that will take the taste out of your mouth, moisten your throat which is most likely raw and has enough ginger root in it to help settle your nausea until I the shot I’m going to give you enters your system.”

“Please drink it Loki, it will help,” said the slender lady.

Shooting her a puzzled glance, Loki tipped his head down and caught the straw the healer was still holding for him. It tasted strange, but not bad. And it did take away the terrible taste in his mouth and felt wonderful going down his abused throat. So wonderful that he was embarrassed at the involuntarily noise of displeasure he made when the straw was removed.

“Okay, Loki. Pepper here,” Banner gestured towards the woman beside him, “tells me you’ve been having panic attacks and bouts of vomiting pretty regularly. And I can see that you’re dehydrated and your throat is pretty torn up.” The healer pulled a few strange objects out of a white container sitting on the edge of the bed. “I going to give you a shot of something that will help with the nausea and then we will start an IV in your arm so I can rehydrate faster.”

Banner opened up one of the packages and showed the contents to Loki.

“No!” Loki shouted hoarsely, eyes widening at the sight of the long needle the man held. He immediately scrambled away from the healer wedging himself in the corner at the top of the bed.

“Oh. Hey. No.” Banner protested after a moment of confusion. “It’s a medical procedure, not torture or anything.”

Loki hated Midgard, he hated that he could feel tears burning in his eyes, but most of all he hated the unreasoning, overwhelming fear that he couldn’t identify, but that told him that the object being held up could cause pain in so many ways. He didn’t know how he knew this, but the fear of that pain caused his heart to start pounding again.

“Hey, no, calm down.” Banner pleaded anxiously, “Okay. No shot, no needles. We can do this another way, it will be slower, but we can do it. Loki, just calm down okay.”

"I'm going to kill Tony the minute he gets back from his trip," the woman named Pepper said in a low throbbing voice.

"I might help you," Banner told her grimly and he picked up the container off the bed, thrusting the offending syringe in it and handing it to the woman and waving her away.

"There," he said soothingly. "I got rid of it. I just need you to breathe with me okay? In and out... In and out." He patted Loki's leg gently. "Shhhhh. It's gone, we won't use that. Okay?"

Was that him making that whining noise?

Banner gave him a pill, which he had a hard time swallowing due the size of the pill and how raw his throat was. The healer then let him drink the rest of the ale before patting him on the leg and telling Loki he'd be back in a few minutes. The woman named Pepper stood watching him from outside of his cell until he returned. Banner carried a big silver bucket full off ice and bottles of that strange ale and another type of drink. As the healer explained that the brightly colored bottles contained minerals and other things his dehydrated body needed, the woman prowled angrily around his cell making furious tch'ing noises.

Banner made him drink a warm Ade drink, a red one, then giving him a draught of some sort before calling out to the Watcher Jarvis.

"Jarvis, this is going to make him a bit sleepy, but it will help the headache he almost certainly has. When he gets up, I want him to slowly drink several of these drinks. Could you keep an eye on him and make sure he remembers?"

"Of course Doctor Banner," said the Watcher.

"Okay Loki? Can you do that for me? You can alternate as you drink them. Take small sips, wait a few minutes, another small sip. It should take you at least a half an hour to drink one. Tell Jarvis when you start, he'll help time you to make sure you don't drink too fast. Understand?"

Loki nodded feeling better but still wretched and his mind felt stretched.

"By this evening you need to have drunk at least four of them okay?"

The doctor lifted his head to again speak to the watcher, "Jarvis, only a clear soup and jell-o for meals today. And more drinks as he can handle them without making himself feel sick, no matter what time it is. Okay?"

"Certainly Doctor Banner," Jarvis said.

"If you start to feel nauseous again tell Jarvis and I'll bring you down some more medicine." Dark brown eyes smiled as Banner tapped him on the chest lightly, "Don't try to tough it out. You don't need to be throwing up any more than you have been." The mortal stood watching him a moment, before pushing the desk chair back where it belonged.

"Loki," the red haired woman dropped a hand down on his thinly blanketed foot, shaking it slightly to get his attention.

Pepper, the man called her Pepper, the Watcher called her Potts.

"Bruce and I will check on you in the morning. But if you start to feel bad, you tell Jarvis and he will tell us immediately. Okay?"

After he just looked at the woman for a minute, not answering, she patted his foot again before leaving the room with Banner. He fell into an exhausted sleep before they had made it past the second set of doors

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Accounting Practices

Chapter Summary

Dollars and Cents and Norse Gods have what in common? Tony is about to find out.

Chapter Notes

Because it is the holidays, I am popping this up a day early. Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 10 – Accounting Practices

Loki was sitting at his desk reading when the walls of his cell fogged up. The first time he had noticed it, he had thought it was frost, but since the glass remained the same temperature and the fogging only occurred when something was being delivered to the antechamber, he knew it was something the mortals were doing to keep him from seeing what was going on outside his cell. It was, he admitted to himself, fairly clever for a technically backwards race without magic and he was dying to know how they did it. Not that he would ask. Sooner or later he would find out, or someone would mention it.

No, he would never ask. Questions told people too much about what he was thinking. It was better to just wait and listen.

Knowing that he couldn't see through the glass no matter how he tried and that he couldn't hear anything outside his cell save what they choose to allow, Loki went back to reading his book, Lessons in Electrical Circuits Volume One. He had a notebook beside him, that he occasionally made notes in. It amused him that the pages of his notebook were held together with a metal spiral of all things and that the cover was a children's illustration of the red and gold armor that Stark had worn on the roof. Apparently the man's hubris knew no bounds.

"Mister Odinson, you have been requested to sit on your bed, Mister Stark is here to see you."

Loki would have liked to scowl. Having to retreat to his bed so the tether connected to his left wrist could be considerably shortened was a major annoyance for him. But he doesn't want anyone to know what did and didn't get to him, so with apparent good grace he complied. Besides it wasn't worth fighting the drugs they were giving him to get really angry. And anyhow the tether could be retracted with or without him moving, dragging him to the bed with a force he couldn't resist. So inwardly seething, but outwardly composed Loki settled on the bed with his back to the wall as was expected.

A few moments later the inner door opened and Stark was resting his shoulder against the doorframe, leaning there with crossed arms. Stark was trying to seem calm and at ease, but Loki could read the lies that the body tells as easily as he does those that fall from people's lips. Stark was angry.

Sitting cross-legged on the bed, elbows on his knees resting his head in the palm of his hands, he gifted Stark with a mocking little pout. “Ah, Stark. I was so hoping that the lovely Ms. Potts would be visiting.”

Tony huffed a little bit of a laugh before walking over to the desk area. “Yeah Slick, I bet you were,” he said. “So.... You seem a bit calmer this afternoon. Brucie find an anxiety cocktail that worked for you did he?”

Wretched creature, Loki thought sourly, watching the man without answering.

Tony poked at the book lying on the desk, “Who brought the book down?” He asked.

He touched the book’s cover a moment, before flipping the notebook open, not that it would do the mortal any good since Loki was using a runic script to write his notes.

Frowning Stark looked up with a puzzled expression. “How is it you read English if this is the language you write in?” He asked curiously.

Loki briefly debated ignoring him, he was annoying and loathesome, but he was someone to talk to.

“I couldn’t read ‘English’ of course; Ms. Potts and your watcher provided me with a child’s program that teaches the Midgardian language to the very young.” Loki said outwardly impassive, but worrying at the odd thoughts he kept having that seemed to suggest that he should have already known how read the language. That in it’s self was odd, since All Speak was exactly that, the ability to understand all speech and to be able to use all speech. So when would he have learned to read it? Oh he knew several Midgardian languages that he had used spells to learn to read many centuries ago, but not this English.

“Jarvis, not Watcher, his name is Jarvis.” Tony said pulling the chair away from the desk placing it further away from the bed beside the desk before sitting down.

“Hummm.” Tony made a strange face, “I’ve only been gone two weeks, Pepper just started yelling at me about you ten days ago and you’ve already learned to read English and are starting to read engineering books?” He seemed puzzled, but since Loki had spent the last several weeks feeling equally puzzled, he really couldn’t sympathize with the mortal.

So he just shrugged, not wanting to even think about those horrible days he spent reading and listening about phonics before receiving the loan of a whole box of brightly colored books that had been outgrown by the daughter of one of Ms. Potts’ assistants. If Loki never had to read about rodents that demanded baked goods or a club full of underage child care givers again he would be ecstatic.

Thankfully since then, Loki had made good use of the various dictionaries Ms. Potts had also provided, one apparently geared towards children and he was now able to split his time between science books and history books for obvious reasons and something called contemporary novels to learn about modern Midgardian culture.

“So...” Stark reached over and flipped a page of the electronic book with a forefinger, “Do you understand this?” He asked curiously.

“Not really,” Loki answered shortly, not taking his eyes off of Stark.

“But you’re still reading it?” Tony persisted. “Why?”

“Background information.”

Stark made another little humm noise but then continued to look at him, obviously waiting for more of an answer. When he didn't continue Stark looked around the cell which had changed a bit in the last two weeks. In addition to the various books on the desk, the bed now had an extra pillow and blanket. Also his wardrobe that he had been wearing since he had woken consisting of thin shorts and thin tight sleeveless tops had been augmented. Loki now also had on a pair of pants and a long sleeve pullover made of a closely knitted material with a soft fleecy inside, he also had socks and a pair of soleless leather slippers obviously intended for indoor use. While not the clothing he was used to wearing, it did make him feel less vulnerable to at least be clothed this much.

“So, you a bit more comfortable now?” Tony asked waving a hand towards his new clothes, the bed and the book.

Which was an incredibly stupid question as far as Loki was concerned. Of course clothes that were warmer and didn't make him feel exposed made him more comfortable as did the extra bedding and of course the books which gave him something to do when he wasn't sleeping or exercising made him more comfortable. Or perhaps it would be more polite to say as comfortable as a person could be while imprisoned in a different realm. He debated ignoring the question, but in the end decided that since things could be ever so much worse, politeness might be a better strategy.

“Yes, thank you.” Loki said keeping his voice and face impassive.

“Yeah, I can see you're just overwhelmed,” the man scoffed pulling his hands out of his pockets and crossing his arms defensively. “But hey, don't thank me, thank your mother, she's paying for it.”

“You mean Asgard is paying for it,” he corrected.

“Now did I say that? No Prince Prozac, I said your mother, I meant your mother. You know, Frigga? Tall, blonde, pretty good looking for an older lady. The queen? Her. Personally.” Tony shook his head and tsk'd. “Did you see anywhere on that contract I showed you that said that Asgard was footing the bill for taking care of your ass? No.”

“And Thor thinks you're the smart brother.”

“My Mother? Personally?” Loki frowned, confused. His mother wasn't poor of course, but most of her money came from the crown coffers, since her personal estates were not large. And how did this annoying mortal know Thor?

Stark tried several times to steer the conversation towards questions about the BiFrost, general magic use and metallurgy, but Loki kept asking him about why he was here rather than Asgard. And how was it that Stark knew his brother Thor. Since Stark wasn't answering any of Loki's questions about what had happened and why he was here, Loki was certainly not going to answer any of Stark's.

Besides, it bothered him that his mother was paying to keep him here rather than Asgard.

Stark continued to shower him with questions and rather than answering, Loki kept responding with his own. Questions like how much his mother was paying to keep him here and what exchange rate Stark was using to bill her, using since there was not a common coinage. And since Loki had centuries much more experienced at ignoring annoying people, his questions at least got an answer of sorts.

“Fucking hell if I know.” Stark grouched, latching on to the last question, one apparently that he felt inclined to answer. “If I get you copies of the spread sheets we are using and have Jarvis go over the charges will you at least answer one of my questions?” The mortal demanded exasperated.

“Perhaps,” Loki said looking up from under his brows, “Spread sheets are what you call ledger entries?” When Tony nodded Loki continued, “But I would require that the information be clear and properly explained so that I understand it fully before I will answer.”

The mortal rolled his eyes. “Yeah, right. Whatever. Jarvis send Dummy down with one of the big tablets and see what you can do to get Comet here up to speed on spread sheets in general and his account in particular.” Stark straightened up looking at Loki and told him, “I’ll be back to ask my question once you’re caught up on that.”

Stark stood up to leave and then paused a moment before gesturing towards the silver bucket of ice and drinks that had been placed in the antechamber each morning with Loki’s meal. “And if you start to feel bad or need more of those to drink, tell Jarvis to call me right away okay?”

As if Loki would ever ask for anything from his jailors.

OoooO

It had taken three days for Donder to totally understand the spread sheet explanations. Although from watching the video feed that he had piped into his lab while Jarvis ran through the explanations, Tony suspected that the god completely understood the finance part with in a few hours. And most of that time would have been him and Jarvis deciding on the exchange rate between Earthgard and Vikingard so he could compare prices.

However, for those three days, while Tony worked on his suits and tinkered with a few projects, he watched as Loki kept side tracking from asking about the financial stuff to explore the actual operations of the tablet and the spreadsheet program itself. All Loki’s questions had been perfectly politely phrased of course and all in an effort to completely understand the process of course. And they were almost all bullshit of course, since the god was apparently determined that he was not going to admit to understanding his accounts until he understood the underlying mechanics of the hardware and software they were presented to him on.

Tony felt like tearing his hair out at the delay, but he had to admit the guy caught on fast.

But at last even the trickster god couldn’t drag the explanations out any longer and they finally finished. Which was great as far as Tony was concerned, in the morning Tony could visit, ask his question and get his weekly face to face visual inspection taken care of also. Best of all, it would be totally legit since this was a new week.

Take that Pepper Potts.

Tony spent the next hour tinkering with his suit and thinking about which question he really wanted answered first. And wondering what else, besides answers he couldn’t provide, that he could use as a bribe to get the god to identify the properties of those metals that Frigga had given him and maybe discuss the BiFrost.

It was maybe an hour later when the sound of a soft grunt made him look back up at the screens he had forgotten to tell Jarvis to shut off. There he saw Loki, stripped down to his tank top and boxers, twisting and turning in the middle of his cell in ways that would make a professional gymnast ninja ballerina green with of envy. Or a cat even. Slow, smooth, mesmerizing moves. Moves that Tony didn’t realize a six foot plus, guy could make. Even if he was totally cut.

Tony had seen Pepper doing yoga and had even worked out with her a few times to her videos, but he wasn't sure he had ever seen a guy do routines like this. At one point Loki stood in the middle of his cell on the tips of his toes, back arched, arms hyper-extended overhead and his fingers laced with palms pointing to the ceiling. Additionally, this position caused his tank top ride up, allowing an excellent view of his well-defined lower abs. He held that position without a quaver for at least six minutes before bending over to place his palms flat on the floor and slowly lifting his legs first up into a regular handstand and then a full side split, back up into a handstand and then hyper extending his back until his feet were flat on the floor as he stood up again.

Not that any of the moves the god made weren't moves Tony had never seen before. Hell, he watched the winter Olympics after all, it's just they were all in fricking stop-motion. There was no floor routine flow, no momentum to carry the moves through. Instead Blitzen would move a bit and then freeze, holding impossible looking positions for a minute or two before moving a bit more. Sometimes it took Loki several minutes to complete a walk over handstand for instance.

And Tony didn't even want to think about that whole full side split that ended up with the god's inner thighs, pelvis, chest and shoulders flat on the floor. That one made Tony's own muscles wince in sympathy. It was also the one also made him decide that perhaps he needed to supply his 'guest' with some lycra support yoga shorts, because using regular boxers as shorts just wasn't cutting it.

At least not for Tony's peace of mind.

"Jarvis, cut the feed to our guest level please," he asked hoarsely as the god moved into a new set of static strength poses, this set starting out with slow motion handstand pushups.

Chapter End Notes

And yes I had a lot of fun envisioning this chapter. ;)

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Just a bit bothered

Chapter Summary

Tony's deal with a Trickster god goes about as well as expected. Which is not very.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 11 – Just a bit bothered

After that little exercise show of the day before, Tony was not entirely comfortable entering Loki's cell. It wasn't that Tony was never interested in good looking guys, he was occasionally, but they weren't his normal cup of coffee. But damn... Despite being a maniac killer, this guy was ripped, but not all bulked up muscles like Thor or Captain Spangles. Instead Loki was slender like a male model, all kind of... Not that it mattered anyway since he was totally into Pepper... But shit, the guy did have legs that went on for forever and limber, hell yeah.

At any rate, Tony couldn't avoid going in person indefinitely since Pepper had demanded that he check on Loki visually at least once a day and visit the god face to face at least once a week. So he might as well get this week's face time over with while asking his question. But for some reason the whole visit felt awkward to Tony, even if Prancer wasn't in boxer shorts and twisted up like a pretzel.

"So. About my question," Tony said as the door slid open.

A startled glance was tossed his way, but then green eyes narrowed. "There are charges on my account that I wish to contest Stark." Loki interrupted.

The god had been lying on his stomach reading when Tony had opened the door. The trickster's sock covered feet were up in the air crossed at the ankles, one fist supporting his chin, while his other, tethered hand dangled over the foot of the bed, turning the pages of a large physics book lying on the floor. He reminded Tony of nothing so much as a kid at summer camp whiling away a rainy day.

"Yeah, and I want my question answered," Tony countered, ignoring the long lean body that had rolled onto its side to regard him. Tony was just glad the god was wearing long jersey knit pants with his tank top rather than boxers. Not that the rucked up thin tank top left much to the

imagination even if it had been pulled down.

While Tony propped himself up in the doorway, the god sat up on the edge of the bed, glaring briefly at the tether attached to his cuff, which refused to allow him more slack even if he moved slowly.

“Fine. What is your question,” Loki asked looking at Tony with the air of someone who was used to being patient with small annoying children.

All righty! Science! Something to take his mind off muscle definition, Tony couldn't stop a large grin from spreading across his face but he did manage to not rub his hands together in anticipation. He moved the desk chair over to what was becoming his accustomed spot of beside the desk and right by the door and sat down.

“Tell me about the BiFrost,” Tony said happily.

“No,” came the god's flat reply.

What?

What kind of aggravating shit was Loki trying to pull? After all, Tony had made sure his spreadsheet question was answered. Three freaking days answered.

“Hey! A deal's a deal. Just answer the question.” He told the blank faced deity sitting across from him.

Loki smirked eyes alight with mischief, “I will be more than happy to answer your question as soon as you ask one.

Tony glared. “I just did,” he told the grinning god with a warning note in his voice.

“No Stark you asked for a story, a dissertation as it were. I only agreed to answer one question.” Loki replied, amusement written large across his features.

“So how is it that Jarvis spent three days answering your questions and you refuse to answer mine?” Tony demanded, starting to become more than a little pissed.

Tony was rewarded with a smirk, “I would venture to suggest that it is because I was more specific with what I wanted for my side of the bargain than you were for yours. Also I did not refuse to answer a question; I refused to ‘Tell’ you about the BiFrost.” Loki's brow lifted in amusement, he clapped his hand together and then spread them out. Not unlike a magician's flourish at the end of a trick. “There, I have answered your question. Now let us move on to my problems with your accounting practices.”

“What? Hey no! That wasn't my question.” Tony yelled, scowling before he quite frankly started to pout. Okay, technically he was screwed. And the rat bastard Asgardian who had just played him had been most likely laying for a chance to do so.

Fucker.

Tony spent the next hour being challenged to justify charges that were on the Loki's cost sheet. Apparently besides being a psychotic wizard, the bastard was also an accountant and a quartermaster. It seemed that his Eminence thought that the food charges were too high. Since the tower cafeteria closed after lunch, Tony normally ordered dinner as take-out for them both. As the restaurants that Tony ordered from were rarely exactly cheap, those meals resulted in prices that

offended the penny pinching god.

Loki's proposed solution to the problem was a small refrigerator and judicious purchasing of fruits and vegetables that could be eaten raw, coupled with lunchmeats, breads and some preserved food that didn't necessary need to be cooked like tuna and peanut butter. The savings on evening and weekend meals, even adding in the cost of grocery delivery would easily pay for the refrigerators in just over two months.

"Rudolf, I do have refrigerators already available on the property." He said wearily thinking of the entire bank of empty fridges on the entertainment floor. He looked up from the figures he had been reluctantly reviewing wondering how this was turning into as bad a whipping as one of Pepper's frigging finance meetings.

So he was taken aback by the speculative look he received from the god.

"And your valuation for use of space in these refrigerators per quarter would be?" Loki asked in a very polite yet unyielding manner, which reminded Tony of that bastard Darisen, his head of Accounting.

"What the hell Reindeer Games?" Tony huffed, starting to get really pissed. "Do you think I am going to pad the bill?"

Here at least, the god had the grace to look slightly discomfited.

"By no means Stark," he apologized. "I assure you I meant no slur upon your honesty; this is merely force of habit I assure you."

"To nitpick over every piddling little thing? Who the fuck develops habits like that?" Tony demanded more than slightly exasperated.

Loki looked at him incredulously before his brows furled in a deep frown.

"What exactly do you think second princes do Stark? We manage. Since I was old enough to leave my mother's hall, I have been rotated through every area of the court. When I wasn't delivering unpalatable orders to those not quite high enough to merit the attention of the King or Crown Prince, my main responsibility was taking care of the various finances attached to my current service."

Okay, didn't see that one coming, Tony thought, it had never occurred to him that Loki would have ever done anything more than quaff mead with his brother and lounge around in goat horns all day. But if he did think about it, it did make sense. After all, no matter how good Thor was at smiting stuff, he didn't seem to be the kind of guy to make sure all the balls stayed in the air when it came to juggling the day to day running of a kingdom. Doubtless those thankless tasks would have to be handled by someone else. And who would know better what had to be done than the spare heir.

"Well. Yeah..." Tony grimaced in something suspiciously close to sympathy. "I'm guessing that must have made you real popular."

"You have no idea," said the god in a flat hard voice. "At any rate, if my mother is personally paying for this, for reasons you are withholding from me, I would like to see the charges are not unwarranted or excessive. Her bridal estates were not large and should they be exhausted my next prison might be worse."

"Fine, fine. Anything else you want to nitpick... I mean challenge?"

And there were. Several items. Tony wanted to slam his head on the table beside him as Loki meticulously went over the charges he deemed excessive line by line. The biggest of course was the charge for the space he was using and the costs to heat and light it. Loki of course did not want his mother to be fraudulently charged for the whole floor when he only was using less than two hundred square feet of it.

“Hey!” Tony yelped, stung by the accusation that he was trying to pull one over on the Queen of Asgard.

“Stark, if it was not for the charges incurred by my mother I would not be assisting you in the oversight of this contract. Please understand that. However this one time, in the spirit of cooperation, I am going to help you. While this is not the information you were thinking of getting for your question, I am not obligated to tell you and it is free.”

Loki’s emerald eyes bored into Tony’s and he continued in a very serious manner.

“Asgardian penalties for breach of contract and fraud are quite severe, especially when they concern royal contracts. You would be well advised to keep that in mind,”

“Well Geeze. Thank you for that Poindexter,” Tony retorted, “Very helpful information from the guy who is already in jail.”

“Ah, yes. Let’s us talk about that.”

“Hell no. I have a non-disclosure clause and I wouldn’t want to breach my contract by telling you something I’m not supposed to.” Tony wrinkled his face before smiling smugly at the god’s darkening expression. “But hey, nice try there Blitzen.”

“I’m glad you enjoyed it,” the god retorted somewhat sourly, not nearly as impassive looking as he had been just moments earlier.

“Yeah. I did.” Tony was feeling pretty smug; he knew the god was getting pissed. “So since I have no intention of breaching my contract, let alone defrauding anyone I’m not too worried.”

Okay.

Tony was totally not expecting the look he was getting. Prince Pencil Pusher, who had already been pissed at him, was copping a righteous haughtiness and damn if it wasn’t the same look he always got from his Head Accountant. He wondered if accountants had to practice certain expressions in front of a mirror and maybe pass a test on them or something. Accountants, annoying bastards, every single one of them and sadly Loki was one of their breed. Who knew?

“Stark, it is my understanding that the Queen of Asgard is being charged for the whole floor because the excess space is to be available for a secure exercise area. Correct?”

“Yeah--”

“And in fact...” Loki interrupted looking down at his notes a minute, “Even though I did not even step a foot in the area at all in the last two months, nor have I ever used it for exercise since I got here she is still charged for it. Correct?”

Tony opened his mouth totally intending to hotly reply, but a complete lack of a good answer... Other than he had forgotten to allow outside exercise periods, coupled with the raised brow Comet was throwing his way made him unable to even come up with a bull shit justification.

“While I realize that you cannot use the remainder of the space for much with me being here, the lighting and heating costs are not inconsiderable and could be dispensed with since it is not being used. Could they not?”

“You’ve been pretty sick, I wasn’t sure if you were up for it,” Tony offered feebly. “Using it as an exercise area that is.”

And there it came, His Royal Smugness, lip curled on one side, brow raised and that ‘Don’t even go there’ look in his eye. Tony had been wondering when ‘that Loki’ was going to show up.

“Ah.” Loki took the note book beside him and made a notation in those fricking runes that Tony couldn’t read before asking with mock gentleness, “You don’t think perhaps that the lack of exercise or activity might not have contributed to the panic attacks and their severity Mister Stark?”

He looked calmly up at Tony, his head titled in polite inquiry.

“You studied law in Asgard didn’t you?”

“I did tell you that I was rotated through all the branches of the royal court yes?” Loki said with a quick shark like grin.

“No, I’m not talking about keeping their books or anything. You,” Tony pointed an accusing finger at the god, “Studied law. Didn’t ya?”

Loki shrugged, “Not studied per say, but when you have been rotated through the Logmars service several times, you either learn what they are doing or they will bury you.” He again flashed Tony a quick tooth filled grin, “Let us just say that after the first time I was in charge of them, I did enough private reading that they found me increasingly difficult to bury.”

Well Thor had said that his brother was smart and Tony had watched him totally master the use of a Stark pad to run an accounting program in just several hours. And he was a couple of centuries old too, so it made sense that he had learned a thing or two. Which made Tony wonder how come Point Break was so... Okay he was going to have to go with not bright and that was being generous. Thor was a nice enough guy and all but with the extra centuries of time to learn stuff, surely he should have been... More.

“Look, Chintzy McGee,” Tony said tiredly, “just go over the bill with Jarvis, anything reasonable he’ll fix. Any refunds that need to be made, he’ll make this quarter, any savings you can figure out in the future let Jarvis know. As long as it doesn’t jeopardize safety or security Jarvis can authorize them.” Tony stood up to make his escape before he became ensnared in another dispute over the cost of toothpaste or something else stupid.

“Oh and Jarvis,” Tony said before he turned to leave, “I want you to notify me anytime something on the contract that isn’t being adhered to okay?”

Chapter End Notes

End Note - I thought about this chapter a lot. I mean, granted there is feasting and sparing and of course glorious battle every now and again... but still. Somehow the whole mess has to stay running. And someone has to oversee it at the higher levels. And heaven's knows it won't be Thor, he most likely had his own career path mapped

out in between drinking and wenching and battle. He has to learn Lying and cheating, errr, I mean diplomacy and of course where all the skeletons are buried throughout the nine realms. So it would most likely fall to the spare heir, who already had the lying, cheating, diplomacy crap down, and possibly even helped find out about the skeletons in the first place. Although I would bet that Heimdall was a big help there... the voyeuristic old fart.

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Play time with no toys

Chapter Summary

Things start looking up for Loki, then he starts to over think them. Never a good idea.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 113,000 words so far. Please note.... slow build.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 12 – Play time with no toys

Several hours after Stark left, the doors to Loki's cell opened and a clasp on his cuff retracted. While his first impulse was to dash out the doors, he instead sat there wondering if this was a ruse of some sort.

"Mister Odinson," Loki looked up suddenly. "I must inform you that all exits on this floor are secured and will remain that way as long as you are not in your cell."

"So I am permitted to leave? For how long, may I ask?" Loki asked calmly, hiding his hesitation he stood and approached the door.

"Initially for two hours a day when Sir is on the premises." Jarvis replied. "I have no objection to scheduling it at the time of your choosing so long as he is in the building."

Loki walked through the antechamber for the first time since his aborted escape attempt. "And should he leave unexpectedly?" he asked the Watcher, inwardly excited that he might be able to map out Stark's schedule. Not that he was yet sure what he would do even if he did escape, with Heimdall not answering his call for transport and his family supposedly behind his being incarcerated here on Midgard. But it was still something to plan for just in case.

"Then you will have to wait until he returns to use the rest of your allotted time."

Walking over to the windows he saw that he was indeed hundreds of feet in the air and apparently in the middle of a large city. During his brief escape attempt he had really been too distracted to notice much of anything so he studied every detail he could make out.

The calm voice paused a moment as Loki walked over and pressed his fingertip to the window. "I

must inform you that the windows on this floor are unbreakable shatterproof glass and that any attempt to damage them or anything else will cause your exercise privileges to be revoked for an indefinite period of time. This will also occur if you do not immediately return to your room and replace your wrist cuff when ordered to do so.”

“I understand,” Loki told him, wondering why Jarvis had made a point of mentioning that the windows on this floor were unbreakable. That must mean that the windows on the other floors could be broken. That was surely something to remember even if it was not immediately apparent how much use it might be to him now.

In the end he spent almost all of his allotted time walking slowly around the floor, fingertips trailing on the glass, talking to the Watcher and seeing what questions he could get him to answer. While he would not identify where on Midgard Loki was being kept, or anything really about the building itself, the Watcher would identify and explain other things. Loki was fascinated by self-propelled carriages and wagons in the street since most intercity transport in Asgard proper was by foot or horse rather than skybarge. And the idea that all of the people disappearing as they walked down the sidewalks were actually going down steps to a ‘train’ of carriages that ran underneath the city was very interesting. Tunnels that ran entirely around and throughout the city, Loki wanted to definitely learn more about those.

Due to the angle of view, it impossible to see the base of the building he was in, except for one part that jutted out. That section was very low, with a glass roof perhaps only a floor or two tall. He was too high up to see within it, but he did notice people entering and exiting it sporadically. Or rather sporadically until later in the afternoon when a positive flood of people exited going in all different directions and many of them vanishing down into the stairways that had been described to him.

Loki watched them and noticed that several other buildings that he had a better view of were experiencing the same exodus.

“Watc--, Jarvis, what time is it please?”

“5:14 p.m. Mister Odinson. You have forty-six minutes left for today’s exercise period.”

Deciding that he could take in more sights another day; Loki decided to warm up and do some sprint and distance jump drills until it was time for him to return to his cell. Of all the solitary exercises that the Sparring Instructors had assigned, those had always been his favorite. Or rather they had been when he was out on the dirt sparring field. At first he thought he was just out of practice, but after a few more slips he decided that it was the polished floors and his lack of adequate footwear. His soft leather slipper fit too loosely and his socks gave no traction on the highly polished floor. Barefoot worked at first, but after he completed several laps and was starting to sweat even his feet started slipping out from under him.

By the time the Watcher told him to return to his cell he had narrowly avoided several bad slips and was pretty disgusted. So it was with poor grace that he snatched up his slippers and socks and returned to the cell, throwing himself on the bed. He had been hoping to tire himself out a bit, but he had been too worried about injuring himself to get any kind of a work out. While Loki could still do his strength exercises, they wouldn’t help his speed or stamina, something he would definitely need if he ever wanted to escape.

Loki didn’t throw his slippers across the room in disgust like he wanted to. Instead with more control than he would have ever thought to use for such a simple task, he rolled over and placed his slippers and socks neatly underneath his bed. He then sat quietly at the desk with a book that had been delivered with this morning’s breakfast, *The Beginners Guide to Electronic Circuits and Circuit Design*. Loki had found it very helpful when he had been reading it earlier in the day, and

had been pretty excited to receive it. But now if he stared at certain pages for long periods of time, it could be that he was carefully studying the illustrations and charts. He wasn't, but nobody else needed to know that.

OoooO

"Mister Odinson, if you would place your bare feet flat on the projection where indicated and hold still a moment I would appreciate it."

Loki looked up from his book, it was dark outside, so he must have been sitting there for a couple of hours. Sighing, he looked over and saw that the Watcher had activated a training screen, which was somehow projected onto the floor a few feet from his desk.

It took a bit of shuffling, and leaning back at just the right moment, but eventually both bare feet were positioned as requested. While he of course couldn't be sure why he was being requested to do this, he did suspect it was necessary to get foot wear suited the floor surface of his exercise area. A bar of light passed several times over his feet before the Watcher Jarvis indicated that he could move. He definitely could have asked, but he decided to wait, sure that he would find out eventually.

As soon as the screen disappeared from the floor, the glass walls frosted over, indicating that something was occurring outside of his cell that he wasn't allowed to see. He was putting his socks back on when the inner door opened allowing him access to the delivery cart. A most welcome occurrence, since he was in an almost constant state of hunger. But his dinner tray contained only the usual modest amount of food, not nearly enough to satisfy his appetite. His strength may have been reduced to that of a mortal, but his body was still of a normal Æsir configuration and he needed much more than the amount of food than his jailors apparently felt was necessary.

Still, he was grateful for it. While not nearly enough, it would keep him alive and reduce his hunger pains somewhat. And they were still giving him those extra drinks in the morning. While the Ginger Ale was just sugar, the Gatorade Performance drink, which came in such very odd colors, had enough calories to dull his hunger for a short while. So he tended to save the drinks for when his hunger pains got really bad. Of course now that he was no longer throwing up what meals he did receive, several times a week that helped too.

With barely a conscious thought he silenced the whining voice in the back of his mind told him he could just ask for more food. If Stark thought he was going to beg for anything he was sorely mistaken. He was doubtless going to be imprisoned here a long time so he needed to pace himself. Loki knew he had nothing but information to bargain with, which Stark was very interested in, so he wasn't going use his one tradable commodity on something like a frivolous request for a few extra bites of food.

A small smile tugged at the corners of Loki's mouth that had nothing to do with the food on his tray or even the books he picked up from the cart's lower shelf.

Besides, Loki was almost certain that all he really had to do to get larger portions was to wait. Eventually the tall woman named Potts would visit him and then his diet would be amended without him having to trade information for it. And if Stark got in trouble because his prisoner still was losing weight, well that was just a happy bonus wasn't it?

OoooO

The lights in Loki's cell never went out, but since he had protested the waste of money, the lights on the rest of the floor were kept off unless needed. A welcome bonus of this practice was that it

helped his sense of time, since even when the walls were frosted, he could tell whether or not they were backlit with natural daylight.

But night or day his cell was always lit and he could never escape the scrutiny of the Watcher named Jarvis. No matter the time, no matter how softly he called, or even if he only gestured, Jarvis responded. Jarvis saw everything no matter how small and Jarvis was always watching. Anything that Jarvis saw or heard so could Stark. Unless Loki hid under his blanket like a mewling child, any noise of dismay, any slump in his posture, any tensing of his muscles, any expression that flitted across his face was theirs to see as they desired. Nothing except his thoughts were private. Nothing. And his thoughts were only private so long as he could discipline his body not to react to them.

That Loki could do, not react. Norns knew he had centuries of practice in keeping his thoughts and feelings to himself. No matter how happy, terrified, vengeful or remorseful he felt Loki could hide it. Mastering every movement, mastering every word, mastering the very gleam in his eye. Even more he could project an entirely different emotion from the one he was feeling, complete and perfect so that no one except his mother had ever known. After all, such duplicity was a necessary skill for a second prince, a future Chief Advisor, at least one for one who was also a Seiðr wielding male who was constantly commanded to know his place.

But he'd never had to mask like that, day after day, season after season. There was a price to pay for such mastery over every physical aspect of his exterior appearance and it was extracted in full every day. Sadly, the price was particularly painful when Loki's thoughts were so directly opposed to what he was projecting physically.

However no matter what price he was willing to pay, nobody had such mastery while they slept, in slumber the truth came out no matter how controlled he could be while awake. Oh, in the past it had been possible. Glamours could hide full blown nightmares while he slept, but Loki could no longer cast glamours, though he dearly wished he could.

OoooO

When Loki was a youngling he had imagined that Nightmares were large black war horses with smoldering red coals for eyes, flame licking sparks dancing across their dull coats and steel shod hooves that dripped fire like the something fresh pulled from a dwarven forge. Terrifying, because they were drawn from his own reality.

After all, war horses in general and his father's in particular were terrifying just to look at. Djöfullinn was an enormous coal black, viciously-tempered animal even from afar. He was much, much worse however when as a child, Loki tried to sneak into Djöfullinn stall to ride him on a dare. That had certainly not gone well; he and several of the stable hands who came to his rescue had been injured. Varying degrees of retribution had rained down on his head from several quarters, the stable master, Eir's head healer, Mother, with the worst of course being from Father.

And of course Djöfullinn never forgot it, something that Sif had found hysterically funny. The stallion's screaming challenges and attempts to kick down his stall whenever Loki was around, made later forays to the stables for legitimate reasons extremely nerve-racking. Loki had always thought privately that beside Sleipnir himself, the one other good thing that had come from that whole horrific experience with the wall was that Djöfullinn had been sent to stay at a remote stud farm once Sleipnir was fully grown.

But if Djöfullinn no longer represented his nightmares, that certainly didn't mean they no longer occurred. Frequently in fact might even be a bit of an understatement; while he had not known at first, now he was almost certain that the cause of most of them was that something had happened

with his family.

Sometimes Loki woke himself up from the nightmares, sweating, breathless and occasionally bloody. More often Jarvis woke him up and twice it had been Stark. On one memorable occasion when apparently even Stark had not been able to bring him out of it; Banner had been sitting with him in the morning, having apparently drugged him into unconsciousness and bandaged the injuries he had gotten from flailing around during his distress.

“Of course I don’t understand, but you should. Honestly Loki, I think it would help if you just talked it out. A lot of times discussing your nightmares and getting them out in the open takes away the emotional charge.” Banner said, pausing to wipe his glasses off before replacing them and giving Loki a searching look.

Like Loki was foolish enough to give mortals in general and his jailors in particular any insight into what made him afraid.

“You may be right Doctor Banner,” he said sincerely, surprising the good doctor. “Let’s discuss why I am here on Midgard, that seems to be at the root of many of them. I think getting that out in the open would me help a lot.” Smiling tiredly, he cocked an eye brow at Banner, “Let’s discuss that shall we?”

“You know it would, but I can’t. We’ve explained this to you before,” Banner said earnestly despite the eye roll he was getting from Loki.

And that had been the end of another fruitless attempt to gather more information.

Banner had been upset when Loki wouldn’t give him even a general idea of what was triggering the dreams. After badgering him for a few days without success, Banner had sent Loki a study paper about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder that detailed coping skills to direct traumatic dreams so they would not be as severe. This was actually very thoughtful of the good doctor and might even have been helpful if Loki could have figured out why the perfectly innocuous things he was dreaming about were triggering such violent responses. He of course didn’t tell Banner this; Loki merely said he couldn’t remember anything about his dreams that should have caused a nightmare.

Two months later Banner came down to talk to Loki after Jarvis had informed him of a particularly bad night. Apparently as instructed by the doctor, Jarvis had orders to question Loki when he woke him up. Before Loki was even awake enough to remember that a conversation had taken place, Jarvis would ask him about his dream. Banner brought several sheets of paper detailing the dates and subjects of his dreams, and while he had no intention of discussing anything so private with his enemy, even after so many months, Loki no less than Doctor Banner was at a loss to understand why they were occurring.

Sometimes he didn’t remember the dream enough to tell Jarvis anything. But even when he did, very few of the topics listed were anything that should have triggered a nightmare. Oh there were a few things from his youth, tricks that went bad, dwarfs, Svaðilfari and the builder, and a couple bad battles from when he was older. But for the most part when Jarvis woke him, he had been dreaming about perfectly normal day to day activities.

Loki had dreamt of sparring with Thor and his friends, monitoring meetings with the council, taking messages to Heimdall from his father, reading history books about the nine realms in the library and attending feasts with his family in Asgard. Mostly simple everyday activities, certainly nothing to trigger the heart stopping terrors that made him scream until his throat was raw. With those few exceptions from his youth, there was no real reason Loki or Banner could see why the events in those dreams should be causing him such distress. But since they did, that must mean that

the real reason was missing.

So... Without knowing why, Loki was in prison with the approval of his family. On another realm, that Thor had visited in recent times. It was farfetched, but just barely possible that Loki could have somehow been tainted by association with people plotting against the throne. However there was no way that Thor could have known anyone in Midgard without Loki knowing about it. By Yggdrasill, Thor had not willingly gone on a quest without him in over five hundred years. And even if this had been one of the few times that Loki had managed to avoid accompanying him, there was no way in Niffleheim that Loki could have escaped hearing about the adventure in detail several times... At the very least. This lack, more than anything else told him that some of his memories had been removed.

And that is what truly frightened Loki. Only the most dangerous of state prisoners were subjected to memory erasure. What had he done or learned that was so dangerous that his very thoughts had been stripped from his mind for the good of Asgard?

OoooO

“Sir?”

“Yeah Jarvis?” Tony answered.

“Sir, you did ask me to keep you informed about your guest. I’m afraid he had another bad nightmare.”

Chapter End Notes

Well heck. This chapter is kinda a character setter, our last one thank gods. The next chapter when things start to move, or go wrong, or bad... Okay, we are just going to have to stick with bad.

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Know thy Enemy

Chapter Summary

This is why Tony has robots instead of have pets or houseplants. Pepper is not amused.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 114,000 words so far

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 13 – Know thy Enemy

“Sir?” Jarvis called, muting the music in his lab.

“Yeah Jarvis?” Tony answered absently examining the specs for a ceramic engine block being used by the Mazda MZR inline 4. Not that Tony would be caught dead driving an econo-box Mazda, but the engine spec were pretty interesting and that sparked all kinds of fun ideas.

“Sir, you did ask me to keep you informed about your guest. I’m afraid he had another bad nightmare. I was able to get him to wake up and calm down, but it did take several minutes.”

Tony leaned back in his chair, reaching up to rub his right temple. “What about Jarvis?” he asked tiredly.

“A family evening playing Skáktafl with his father sir.”

Tony sighed. “Was he able to go back to sleep?”

“No sir, he’s reading,” replied the AI

Playing Viking chess with daddy dear huh?

“Crap, there is just nothing to work with there Jarvis,” Tony said tossing his tablet on the table and rubbing his tired eyes.

“No sir. It would seem his sub-conscious knows he should be afraid about something involving the people he is dreaming about, just not what.”

“I understand Jarv, but there’s nothing I can do about that, even if I wanted to, I can’t per the

contract. And besides, it's not like the god of assholes doesn't deserve them."

Because frankly Tony thought a few nightmares a week and those near constant panic attacks were a pretty small price to pay for what Loki had rained down on New York. While it wasn't snake venom and being tied to a rock, Tony will take what he can get as revenge against the murdering bastard who threw him through a window. But Bruce and Pepper don't really think that way. So when the panic attacks along with the other physical ailments they were causing the god, came to their attention, Tony was forced to agree that the deity needed some relief from them.

And honestly, after a few months of having Jarvis report almost daily on the severity of the panic attacks, Tony had been feeling like a total shit for allowing them to continue anyhow. And truthfully he was starting to feel the same way about the nightmares. He knows what it feels like to not be able to sleep.

"You know Jarv, I've tried to tell him a few things just to see if it would calm his shit down, but I just can't. You know why."

"Perhaps I could sir?"

The question just hangs there; Tony can't even make himself give Jarvis the okay. Fucking Asgardian contracts and their magic geas!

But there is one thing he can do. Bruce had repeatedly pointed out to all of them that he is not that kind of doctor; But Bruce has studied enough medicine and psychology over the years that he's become a pretty good general physician with a lot of knowledge in other areas. So he is the go-to guy when a member of the Avengers needed help with something they don't want to go a SHIELD supplied physician with. Or for times like now, when Tony has a 'guest' that he isn't wild about taking to a regular doctor.

Fuck, this is so not worth it.

"Jarvis, please send a message to Bruce and ask him about switching Merlin's PTSD med to that Prazosin he was talking about and seeing if it won't help the nightmares too. I honestly can't think of anything else left for us to try."

OoooO

There were books stacked high up one of the walls of Loki's cell. Mostly the books were works of science, some pertained to government, law or psychology with just a few being works of popular fiction that Loki deemed worthy of a possible revisit. They reflected a massive data dump of the types of knowledge that Midgard had to offer, or at least as much of it as was available in Stark Tower. And he had a stack of notebooks, divided by subject and filled with questions he had not yet answered and his thoughts and ideas on the ones that he had.

A few of Loki's note books just listed the books he had read and returned to the meal trolley over the last year, along with a summary of their contents, in case he might need to request them again. All his notes were written in Æsir runes rather than the Midgardian English that he now read fluently. All the notebooks except for one. That very special one was written in a nearly dead language known only to the most serious of Seiðr scholars. That notebook held Loki's thoughts and questions about why he might possibly be imprisoned on Midgard.

Racking his brain for a reason why he might be here, Loki had initially thought that Odin might have discovered some of his more recent personal activities. However, as unreasonable as Odin might be about what was and wasn't the proper behavior of a prince, Loki couldn't convince

himself that he would have jailed his own son for something that wasn't even a crime. No. Rather Odin would have once again sent him on some onerous, soul sucking, tedious, yet hazardous and ultimately embarrassing duty for the rather nebulous good of Asgard.

After all, he thought savagely, father did so like to get added value from his punishments.

Odin was indeed... creative about his punishments. But even so... Loki must have done something or he wouldn't have been put in prison. It must have been truly heinous or his own Mother wouldn't have agreed to be part of his incarceration. But the one thing he couldn't figure out was why his memories had been altered. It was hardly an Asgardian custom, almost unheard of in more modern times. After all he could hardly repent his crime if he couldn't remember it.

When he had first arrived, Loki spent the majority of his waking hours afraid, no he was worse than afraid, he was terrified. Fear in a hostile situation is natural, but it is usually the unknown which causes terror. He still didn't know anything, but the blend of drugs Banner had prescribed blanketed the terror to a certain extent. He smiled sourly; it was not unlike throwing a tarp over a Bilgesnipe. Perhaps you couldn't see the ravening monster waiting to disembowel you, but you knew it was still there, only a thin layer of material protecting you from its eventual attack.

A sharp thrill coursed through Loki, followed by a wave of harsh, gut-wrenching despair that lasted several minutes until he could get it under control. Loki snatched up his private note book flipped to the back few pages and added concealed monster to the list of thoughts that caused him unreasoning panic. Taking a page from the good doctor's book, in an effort to figure out why he was panicking he had started listing everything he was thinking about when he got these panic surges. The god had several pages of them listed and he was appalled that so many mundane activities or items had made it onto what was become a very long list.

OoooO

"Tony, what in the hell are you watching?" Pepper snapped.

Fuck!

"Oh, hey Pep," Tony said looking down at the boot thruster he was cleaning. What's up?"

Annoyed, she slapped down a folder beside him and gestured towards the screens open in front of him.

"Tony, what exactly is going on?" Pepper asked, waving an irritated hand towards one of the screens which was presently featuring their current 'guest' as Pepper insisted Tony refer to him as.

Of course, Tony thought, mentally rolling his eyes, but only mentally, because he knew from experience that Pepper was in the optimal position to backhand him. Why can't she be asking me about the other screens with engineering sketches and material specs? Noooooooo, she has to be referring to the screen that has a half-naked god of really lissome power moves, twisting, twirling and leaping his hot self all over the place.

Tony paused, his brows pinched in thought as he watched the god do several very low back and forth motions, before rolling forward into a one hand cartwheel twist thing that ended with his leg sweeping out in a one hundred and eighty degree arc.

How in the hell does he do that stuff?

Tony wished that he could see Loki and Natasha go at it hand to hand; now that would be something to see.

“Oh... Hey, looks like our guest is in the middle of his exercise period.” Tony said, going for an absent minded interested kind of reply.

Although to be honest, he had given Jarvis a standing order to pop the god up on the screen when it was his exercise period, because Tony frankly couldn't really believe some of the moves the guy made. Tony had thought the static strength stuff was unreal, but this stuff was like fluid poetry. And since he had never ever even liked poetry, Tony was kind of amazed at how fascinating it was.

And besides he told himself virtuously, Pep had told him he had to check in on the bastard once a day anyhow, he might as well do it while he was going something more interesting than reading and writing notes in language that flat pissed Tony off because he couldn't decipher it no matter how many snap shots Jarvis snuck.

Although snuck was perhaps too harsh a word, after all Tony wasn't really spying on the deity, Tony had a duty to monitor everything the god did, to make sure that crazy brain wasn't hatching any new take over the world plans. He had specifically warned Jarvis to be on the lookout for any notes referencing lab mice. Which would he guessed be a lot fucking easier if either of them knew what the Asgardian rune for Pinky was. Maybe he could ask Thor next time he came for a visit?

“Tony!”

“What?!”

The sound of a tapping foot echoed through his work shop.

“Hey, Pep. You're the one who told me to check on him every day to make sure he was okay. And heck, Jarvis already ordered him sneakers suited for that floor surface when we noticed he was slipping and having problems. What else do you want me to do?”

Pepper glared at him. “Really Tony? You noticed that?”

Tony nodded, a bit wide eyed.

“You?” she persisted as Tony considered but then rejected looking offended, deciding that sticking to *earnestly trying* was safer.

Pepper tapped her foot again and just looked at the screen for a moment, “Jarvis freeze the feed will you? Okay... back it up to where he came out of that backward roll thing and stood up... There. Tighten the focus Jarvis... Stop.”

Okay.

Tony examined the screen closely. Hot sweaty guy in a thin t-tank wearing lycra exercise shorts, a pair of grey crew socks and his second pair of Rebok Cross Fit z-tech sneakers, which Jarvis swore were the best shoes for the exercises Loki was doing and the floor surface he was dealing with. Okay, so Jarvis is who decided the circus god needed the trainers, researched and then ordered them. But hey, he built Jarvis, so he should get some credit right?

“What?” Tony asked a bit warily. Outside of legs that went on forever because he was such a tall bastard, Tony couldn't see anything out of place. “The sneakers are new, we replaced the worn pair a few weeks ago, didn't we Jarvis?” he said, defensive in the face of Pepper's increasing disapproval.

“Jarvis, is Loki sick and throwing up again without you alerting me?” she asked.

“No, Ms. Potts, he has only had two episodes in the last six months. Both of which I told you about.”

“Is he refusing to eat?” she said in a dangerously low voice that had Tony edging away from her.

“Not at all, he eats everything he is given, even the garnishes,” the AI said, causing the shoe to drop for Tony.

Even the garnishes? Ah fuck.

“Pep, I didn’t know, I didn’t realize.” Tony apologized, sliding around his work table so it was between them.

“Jesus Tony!” Pepper yelled, “You check in on him every day, your supposedly see him personally once a week, yes?”

Tony nodded his assent anxiously.

“So how the hell did you not notice that he’s isn’t gaining back any weight? The guy is practically naked and you didn’t notice how thin he still is?”

Oh-kay then. I am totally screwed on this one. Time to see what a good defense will do for me.

“Well Pep, unlike you I really don’t pay attention to the bodies of guys...” his voice trailed off as the sparks of anger from Pepper’s blue eyes practically ignited his shirt.

“Oh no. You are not even going there with this one,” she spat at him. “You forget I know exactly what you’ve dragged home over the years.”

She angrily jabbed an index finger at the screen before leveling it at him.

“This is why you have dead house plants and robots instead of pets,” She hissed slamming her hand down on the folder she had tossed on the work bench earlier.

“Anthony Edward Stark, I would very much not like to see you kill someone through neglect, especially if it would most likely sign your own death warrant at the same time.”

Oh.

Oh.

Pepper is almost the only one who worries about him like that, and he would be lying if it didn’t make him feel a bit...

“Besides, it would be incredibly bad for our stock price.”

Bitch.

“Oh low blow Pep.” Tony grouched making a face at her while schlepping over to get coffee, and put more distance between the two of them, just in case. Pepper had been known to start throwing things when she was really pissed. And sadly, mechanical labs have lots of wrenches and other easily grabbed and fairly solid throw-able objects just lying around everywhere. Equally sadly, Pepper had a really strong arm and pretty decent accuracy.

“Well it would Tony, plus I have to spend the rest of my days mourning you. Or at least twelve percent of them.”

Ouch again. Is she ever going to let that go?

“You’re a bitch, you know that right?”

“Yes, Tony I am. But you love me anyhow.”

Well there was that of course, he thought. Looking over at Pepper, he saw that she seemed more pensive than pissed right now; perhaps this would be the right time to offer up another apology and see if this one took.

“I’m sorry Pepper, it just he’s so unlike Thor, it just never occurred to me that he might have the same appetite.”

“Although...” Tony frowned a bit, pensively rubbing the side of his goatee with his knuckles. “Jarvis, did he *ever* say anything about still being hungry?”

“Of course not sir or I would have immediately brought it to your attention.” Jarvis’ reply was slightly defensive.

“I wonder why not?” he muttered glaring up at the screen where the god was just finishing up a series of high forward flips to a hand stand and then some sort of controlled fall backwards to another one of his leg sweeping spin moves. He and Pepper both watched for a few minutes.

“Tony, what exactly is it he’s doing?” Just as he opened his mouth Pepper continued, “Besides exercising, that I get.”

“Mister Odinson says it is called Battle Dance, a display dance done by youths and shield maidens during festivals,” Jarvis informed them.

“Seriously Jarvis?” Tony laughed putting down his coffee.

“This is the Asgardian version of maypole dancing?” Tony was flabbergasted at the idea of the Scourge of New York prancing around in his tower doing a kid’s festival dance.

“Yes sir. Apparently it is one of the few active exercises available to him that he feels he can do without equipment.”

“Hey, I offered to get him some, he didn’t want to spend the money, so don’t look at me like that.” Tony said quickly warding off more glares from Pepper.

“Actually sir, on Asgard it might be considered a festival dance, but it does not compare to Earth’s Maypole dancing, rather it is more like Capoeira Martial Dance, which was a covert form of martial art training for Brazilian slaves.”

Tony exchanged an incredulous look with Pepper.

Okay, it’s a martial art form that just looks like a hot guy who is new age dancing up a storm. That was, Tony thought, more like something the god of sneaky would do, snickering to himself the whole while as we all laughed at him for prancing around doing a kid’s dance. Not knowing he was getting in shape to kick our butts from here to Asgard.

Oh yeah, that was totally Loki.

“Of course it is Jarv, because no place that raised Point Break and Rock of Ages would have normal kid’s dances.”

“I don’t care, back to the main point Tony.” Pepper walked around the bench following him as he tried to ease away.

“Tony I want him at dinner every Friday night,” she told him poking his shoulder with a long manicured fingernail to emphasize her point. “I want to personally check on his condition at least once a week, since I apparently can’t trust you to do that.”

“Ow. Pep, watch the claws. Anyhow, hello secure floor. What are we doing picnic lunches down here on Friday nights?”

“No of course not, upstairs in the penthouse. As for security, you’re a genius, you figure it out.”

“But Pep, I don’t even always make it up for dinner. You know that,” Tony whined, trying his best to look artfully pitiful.

“Yes Tony I do,” she said trapping him against the work bench and leaning over him. “But if you don’t make it, I will be alone eating with Loki, world invader. Is that going to sit right with you?”

“Look,” he said slightly panicked at her crowding him. Not that he doesn’t like to be close to Pepper, he does, just not when she is wearing her no-nonsense suit with a no-nonsense expression. “Look, just let me think about it, I can’t guarantee this week.”

“Fine Tony, next week without fail or we will be having more than dinner come Friday,” she said, backing up a bit before turning and striding towards the door.

She tossed Tony a look over her shoulder as she walked toward the elevator. “Oh and Tony?” She raised that finger and pointed toward the work bench. “I want them read, annotated and signed by the time I get back up here this evening. Do you understand?”

As soon as Pepper had swept out the door, Tony bowed his head, tapping it gently on the surface of the workbench. Because as much as he wanted to slam the last fifteen minutes out of his brain he owes it to the world not to risk damaging it.

“Jarvis, can we just talk about how embarrassing that just was?”

“Which part sir? You’re being scolded for not realizing that your guest was not receiving enough nourishment. Or the fact that Ms. Potts caught you watching him exercise?”

Tony looked up with a grimace, “The second thanks... Well both actually... Crap, Jarv, make sure he has enough food to leave a bit uneaten in the future will you? And as for the other....”

“You want me to blank out the screen in anyone comes in during an exercise period, sir?”

“Yeah,” Tony said nodding his head, “that’s exactly what I want you to do buddy. Thanks.”

Chapter End Notes

Sadly don't own the Avengers, Disney and Marvel are not giving them up. Sigh...

Rub a Dub-Dub

Chapter Summary

Business is booming, just not for Tony.

Chapter Notes

It is soooooo hard to snip and tighten when you are doing chapters on the fly. How you other writers do it I have no clue. But I am in awe of your talents!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 14 – Rub a Dub-Dub

“Good afternoon sir. The temperature today is expected to be in the mid-sixties with scattered cloudiness. Mister Odinson has no concerns that have not been relayed previously. Ms. Potts will be back from Germany Friday, she says in early enough to make dinner this time without fail. And the time is one thirty-six in the afternoon.”

Tony yawned and stretched. It was a toe curling, finger extending, back arching, full body stretch. Tossing aside the black on black stylized floral patterned comforter, he sat on the side of the bed a moment before heading to the little genius’ room, pausing on his way at the large dresser just outside the door to grab a much worn Green Day Dookie t-shirt from the top middle drawer and a pair of heavy jersey knit pants from the drawer below. Blearily glad he had taken a shower before he went to bed Tony did his business, brushed his teeth and dressed slowly, smoothing his t-shirt over his stomach with a few absent minded stokes.

Tony’s eyes were sleep crusted and scratchy as grabbed a wet wash cloth and rubbed his face, preparing to greet his day. He wondered what fresh long distance hell Pepper had planned for him this morning. Oh all right, this afternoon, since morning was long gone already.

“Hey Jarvis,” Tony said, blinking as his eyes adjusted to the sun coming in the windows. Running a hand through his messy bed head hair he headed back towards the bedroom.

“Anything scheduled today?” Tony asked as he stretched and ambled out of the bathroom.

“Of course sir, you almost always have something scheduled,” an amused Jarvis told him. “You very often ignore the items on your schedule or arbitrarily clear your schedule, but you almost always have something you should be doing before the day is out.”

Which was not something Tony could argue with, even if he wanted to, which he didn’t. He was not very good at keeping track of stuff that was not design related. Oh he could if it was something that interested him, like perhaps foiling some stupid take-over by his Board of Directors or something fun that would piss Fury off if he got involved with it... but run of the mill everyday details? Too boring to keep track of, let Pepper handle it.

“So, anything important today? Besides whatever Pepper has for me?”

“Yes sir, you have to send the Quarterly report to Queen Frigga today,” Jarvis told him in his normally calm soothing voice, “and you did ask me to remind you to do an actual face to face check before you signed off and sent it.”

“Fine Jarvis, send it to my tablet, I’ll look at it in a minute.”

Humpf. Except for the daily check via Jarvis’ surveillance cameras, Tony hadn’t thought about the imprisoned god in the month or so. Well except for the occasional look when Jarvis starts streaming surveillance video during exercise time.

Okay, okay.

Who cares if he has Jarvis order him in some dinner and takes a break to watch? Hey, Pepper, Bruce and Jarvis are always bugging him to eat more regularly. So he has a favorite show he likes to watch during dinner, at least he is taking a break and eating. That’s what’s important right?

Tony had never really gotten that whole reality show thing, but he thinks maybe now he does. It’s like an entertaining train wreck, you know it’s going to end in disaster but you just can’t help watching. Tony can’t decide if his show should be called *Keeping up with the Odinson* or maybe *The Loki Show*. And he isn’t sure if the train wreck is Loki or him watching Loki, but what he is sure of, is that Loki is much more picturesque than either Jim Carey or Khloé. Which might be part of the problem or attraction or whatever. Hell who knows?

But he does know that just the exercise periods alone would go viral in a heartbeat if he ever stuck any of them up on You Tube. And that is even with no one knowing that the star of them is the former Scourge of New York. And if it entertains the hell out of Tony to imagine what kind of a sales pitch the Loki Show would need if it was shopped around to the networks... Well honestly it is pretty damn funny. Everyone knows his mind goes to some strange places when he is working, so nothing new there. Although it does get him in trouble every now and then, like when he is in the middle of a boring meeting with Fury and the Avengers and it suddenly occurs to him what kind of product placement and sponsorship deals the Loki Show could go after. Hey if Fury can’t take him snickering under his breath he shouldn’t make him come to the damn meetings in the first place.

But since he is pretty sure that he is the only one that would be amused, everything pertaining to his *guest* is stored in separate secure servers, just in case SHIELD ever hacks past Jarvis. And per Pepper insistence, Loki’s name doesn’t appear anywhere, not on file names, not in the files, not on the medical records Bruce has stored, nowhere. Anywhere the name Loki, Frigga or Asgard might have gone, Guest and something else bland is substituted.

Tony grabbed a cup of his favorite life sustaining caffeinated beverage and headed into the living room. While he may like to *watch* said god of mischief doing shit that shouldn’t be physically possible, Tony can’t actually stand being in his non-question answering presence. Therefore Pepper being out of town for the last several Fridays has been a bit of a relief for him.

After all if he was going to see the bastard during the forced meal thingy with Pepper, he didn’t need to schedule any other face time for the in person checks she demanded. It’s not his fault that Pepper has had to cancel the last few times, after all he was ready, so his missing those checks are really Pepper’s fault not his.

Because he was ready, hell he had already modified a shock collar for the god to use when off of his floor, well proximity triggered taser ankle bracelet is what he ended up with. He did start with a

collar, but it ended up looking too bondage kink chic. Not that it wouldn't be a good look for the god, but still not anywhere Tony wants to go. But be that as it may, Tony has got his shit together and is ready for the Psycho Killer Dinner Nights when ever Pepper's schedule allows her to show up. He'll do his face time then thank you very much.

"You know Jarvis, it's hard to believe the annoying one has been here for a year."

"Indeed sir." Jarvis replied, "You did sleep rather late sir, you may want to review the account now. It does have to be ready this afternoon."

Yeah, yeah whatever, Tony thought dismissively, but he did grab one of his tablets from the bar. *Right. Back to business, Tony Stark's Maximum Security Insane God Prison business at any rate.*

Tony set his coffee on the side table and flopped down on the couch. Since the broken god had been unconscious for the entire first quarter that had been an easy report to send. The second quarter Loki had been too freaked, sick or pissed to do much of anything. Once Tony had finally got him calmed down enough that the godling wasn't screaming until he was too hoarse to talk, Tony had actually thought it would go easier. Wrong. Not that Gandalf had been a ton of trouble or anything, hell, give him a book and cookie and the guy was quiet for hours.

Well, maybe it should have been a whole box of cookies, Tony thought guiltily.

Yeah, the guy was keeping quiet not that Tony was exactly happy about that either. He'd been at the tower for a year now and he wasn't cooperating at all and it was making Tony crazy. He knew it was stupid to have hoped that Loki would just 'get over it', hell if it had been him, he certainly wouldn't have. And so yeah the guy was an immortal god, maybe not a god now, but from what his mom said, still immortal, and gods could hold a grudge for centuries couldn't they? So smart as he was, what made Tony be so stupid as to think the guy would just get over it in a few months?

Oh, Tony had got him to talk for a few minutes. But then he had started asking Tony some very pointed questions about what events led to him being on Midgard and when Tony couldn't tell him, he'd icily refused to answer any of Tony's questions, not even about metallurgy. Which totally bummed Tony out, because really, who didn't want to talk about metallurgy?

Stubborn bastard.

OoooO

A short while later Tony was sitting on the couch sipping his first coffee of the day and looking over his 'Guest' account so he could sign the damn thing.

What the...

"Hey Jarvis? Why is the Guest account showing credits applied for this month? Didn't we already make those last quarter?"

"Of course sir, the over charges have already been applied." Jarvis said reassuringly.

Tony closed his eyes a moment, gathering his patience. "So the credits for this month are for? What? Work with me on this one Jarvis."

"Mister Odinson has requested that his wages be applied to his mother's account, augmenting whatever money is left from the original deposit."

"Wages?"

“Yes sir.”

Tony set his coffee down, closed his eyes and rubbed soothing little circles on his temples. “Could you explain to me how it is that a sequestered prisoner has wages?” he asked in a carefully controlled voice. “And while you are at it, could you explain how this occurred without me knowing about it?”

“Actually sir, it was his idea.”

“Jarvis, why doesn’t that surprise me?”

“I couldn’t say for sure sir.”

Tony sat hunched over, hanging his head; his hand had shifted from his temples to the back of his neck as he kneaded the knot that had started tightening there.

“When does he even work? He can’t leave his floor.”

A charge ran through Tony’s spine right up to the knot at the base of his skull, causing him to sit bolt upright and wide eyed.

“Jarvis,” he croaked, the heavy weight of dread sitting on his chest not allowing anything more, “please tell me he hasn’t left his floor?”

“Of course not sir.” Jarvis soothed, “He has already reduced the maintenance costs for his floor by taking over the general janitorial duties, but he asked me if there might be some other tasks he could perform within the confines of his floor that would contribute to his balance rather than just reduce the charges made against it. Apparently a few of the books he read made mention of prisoners working for wages. Since we were already researching if any savings could be achieved by him doing his own laundry vs. the cost of buying the laundry machines this was a natural progression.”

Tony groaned. Not only was he running a prison for wayward space Vikings, but apparently he now had an illegal sweat shop going. Worse, his own AI was helping. Not that he objected to people working mind you... but, but... he wasn’t going to be able to bribe the bastard with anything if he could buy it himself.

Well except maybe for hookers or something. Although Tony wasn’t quite sure if he was ready to turn pimp just to get info on alien tech. Well at least he hoped he wasn’t.

Ah, who the hell am I trying to kid here.

Knowing that if the god would just co-operate Tony would have someone at the tower from an escort service every Friday as Loki’s dinner date. No matter what Pepper had to say about it.

Fine, okay. Yes! The engineer in him was not too proud to pimp for science.

I hope you’re happy now, he told his subconscious, I am officially scum.

Heedless of the distracting thoughts his words were causing, Jarvis continued, “I had already decided that the cost of moving one of the sets of the machines from the entertainment floor down to his could be paid for by him taking care of your day to day laundry for the next several months. But per your instruction to accommodate all reasonable requests he made in regards to the charges being set against Queen Frigga, I also mentioned his wishes to work for wages to Ms. Potts. Along with the information that the vendor with the lab coat laundry contract was still in default of his

delivery times.”

“Really Jarv? You bothered Pepper over a laundry contract?” Tony’s face screwed up in pain. Seriously the god was way more trouble than he was worth.

“Yes sir, really. Ms. Potts agreed with me that giving Mister Odinson a daily task to distract him, would augment the effectiveness of the medicine Doctor Banner prescribed for his panic attacks.”

“Oh she did, did she?” Tony asked peevishly.

Not that Tony really cared what the god did all damn day. If the rat bastard wouldn’t talk science to him, who the hell cared if he was kept busy or entertained.

Except of course for Pepper and Bruce apparently.

And to be truthful, he maybe did care a little bit since it would delay the account getting drawn down enough for Tony to request more material.

Oh, okay, he was pissed about it. Tony had his heart set on getting some of the metals in their raw form and this would delay when he could ask for them. Worst, he couldn’t say anything to Pepper or Jarvis unless he wanted to admit he was officially scum.

Face it, the guy has a gift for getting on my last nerve.

“Yes sir, she felt that the cost of adding additional walls, industrial machines and a negative pressure vent so he can also do coats for the clean lab were well worth the startup costs and should be recouped within six months just on the savings from the reduction of coats needed, eliminating transit loss, delivery delays and reducing the amount of oversight from the payables and contract department.

“Which you pointed out to her correct?”

“Of course sir.”

“Jarvis have we not talked about being *too* helpful?”

So... Apparently Stark Towers now contained not only an alien prisoner but also a sweat shop laundry. Minion, a robot so named by Tony since every evil wanna be dictator should have a servant named Minion, picked up all the laundry and delivered it to the laundry room on the ‘Guest’ floor while the god was eating breakfast. Then later when everything was finished, the ‘bot delivered it all back where it came from. The laundry never left the building, never stayed overnight on the restricted floor and was never lost or late.

So yeah, he could see how that was working for the lab, cafeteria and executive lunch room. And that of course meant that after a month long trial which went perfectly, Tony had zero chance of getting Pepper to go back the way it had been. Not that she really gave a rat’s ass about Stark International laundry, but once a problem had been solved she liked it to stay solved.

Joy.

And maybe it wasn’t a sweat shop since Jarvis, per Pepper instructions, had wrangled the necessary paper work to get the god a work visa and tax id number under a name that wouldn’t light up every security sweep SHIELD had.

And maybe Tony had noticed that things had been a crisper and more neatly pressed the last few

weeks and now he knew why. Instead of being popped in a truck, drove around town and then bundled into the building and up to this floor for delivery, now they were ironed and hung on a rolling rack, or folded and placed in a bin on the lower shelf of the rack so Minion could just roll them into Tony's private elevator and deliver them to his walk in closet.

He checked the figures again, actually kinda surprised. Who knew the employees at just this location were spending two thousand dollars a week in laundry fees for lab coats. Okay, so fifty percent of that was picked up by the company, but that that didn't even take into account the money the cafeteria and executive dining room was spending weekly on laundry or what Tony's own accounts were contributing for his laundry. Since the previous contracts were piece work, just with what Loki was doing now he would be able to contribute almost half what Frigga was charged a year.

Which meant it would easily be six months or so before Tony could request additional material, not that he knew exactly what he wanted to ask for. Which brought Tony right back to the source of his current irritation, the fact that the ass god of mischief wouldn't talk to him.

After signing everything and sealing it up the way he was supposed to, he delivered the envelope out to the BiFrost site. Walking back into the house he did have to smile a bit. Having his laundry done by a god was pretty damn funny. But funny or not, he was still going to have a chat with Pepper about delaying his next shipment of extraterrestrial metal.

"Jarvis, remind me to talk to Pepper about this next time she calls would you?"

Of course if he had known the shit that was headed his way that evening he would have just ignored the rest of the day, grabbed a bottle of something good and gone back to bed.

Chapter End Notes

Okay.... There are several house keeping chapters to get us finally out from under the middle of this damn fic. Lord knows I will never post anything again until it is completely finished. But that is water under the BiFrost now, so we are just going to have to wade thru this mess. Therefore for my sanity and hopefully your reading pleasure I am going to post a chapter a day for the next week. That should get us out of the middle of this thing. Enjoy.

Bad Idea

Chapter Summary

Loki ponders the meaning of his imprisonment... Stark grabs a bottle.

Chapter Notes

Second of seven Christmas Pressie Chapters. Try the fish, we'll be here all week!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 15 – Bad Idea

Tony really shouldn't have been drinking this evening; finding out about being the not so proud owner of a prison laundry facility had not been amusing. Neither was the delay he was going to experience in getting the metals he wanted due to the money said laundry was generating for the care and feeding of his least favorite pain in the ass. But that had just been the start of what had turned out to be a totally craptastic day.

Not an hour after he dealt with the quarterly 'Guest' report, he received an unexpected blow as he was informed that the world was absolutely going to stop spinning if he didn't, go into the office and deal with paper work. Seriously, going to the office without even having Pepper to visit with? Hell it wasn't even fun when she was there, let alone when he had to deal with her third string office drone. So no fun. But less fun was when he did speak to her on the phone later that day, instead of being her usual chipper self, Pepper reminded him of things he would rather have forgotten. Like the death of Phil Coulson... Or Agent as Tony had always referred to him.

Tony hadn't even known that Agent and Pepper had dated. He was a fricking genius, how could he have been that clueless?

While they hadn't been dating when he died of course and Pepper had moved on after his death, she and Phil had apparently been friends for a good while. Pretty good friends actually and today her list of reminders had included one about her dead friend's birthday, hence her being in a down mood.

Sad for all concerned of course. But then that triggered an 'Iron Man had put you at risk' melt down. Which was really not something Tony wanted his fiancée obsessing over. Not that Tony wasn't put at risk often enough through experimentation accidents, which she also brought up.

I just can't win today.

So Tony had spent his day dealing with one aggravation after another. He had dutifully signed the huge piles of papers Pepper's office had wanted taken care of, read the stuff Pepper had wanted reviewed and then spent two hours on the phone being a good fiancée as she sobbed over all the various stress triggers that cascaded one right after another. So he ended his day dealing with an emotional Pepper, who was upset by the death of Agent, which had been caused by the same

person who had fucked up the beginning of his day... Loki.

Tony hated dealing with anything that wasn't a clear cut engineering problem. Eventually, escaping to his lab he took a whole bottle of Dalmore Cromartie with him. The billionaire felt mentally and emotionally exhausted, and he fully intended to crawl into the comfort of his bottle and not come out the rest of the night.

After a day like today, I deserved some sort of a reward and you baby are it, he told the very expensive bottle.

OoooO

Tony peered blearily at the bottle that was comforting him, well it had been a whole bottle, now it was more like a third, or possibly only a quarter. Crap, at this rate he was going to have to leave the lab and get another one. Which is not to say that he didn't have alcohol stashed in his lab... he most certainly did. But the stuff hid in the lab was just average everyday forgetfulness, not anything good like this deer head stuff. For that he would have to go upstairs to the bar in his apartment, or possibly even down to the entertainment floor and get into his secured liquor storage room. He wondered if he even had any more of the Dalmore. Idly his finger traced the whiskey's logo, was it a deer or a stag? Or hell, maybe even a reindeer, who the fuck knew?

Rudolf?

Yeah, like that was even possible, asking Rudolf if this, Tony stoked the logo again. Was this his namesake. Or maybe it was Dasher? Or Prancer? Tony snorted. Hell right now Loki might even be Dancer or Prancer. Dude did enough of it that was for sure.

So I occasionally watch video of him when Jarvis allows him an exercise period. Big deal.

Okay, so maybe it was more often than once or twice, who cares. The point is most normal felons were content to do regular exercises, like pushups and crap like that. But oh no, Mister Twinkle Toes had to strip down to a pair of lycra shorts and a skin tight tank and freaking dance. Leaping and jumping and spinning insanely for a couple of hours until he was a sweaty breathless hot mortal mess. Sort of like Capoeira Martial Dance Jarvis said... Tony thought the only thing the god was missing was a stripper pole.

Well never mind that, Tony thought savagely wrenching his mind away from that particularly annoying path.

Of course it wasn't like the words normal or sane could even apply to the former godling, there were other terms that could apply, Tony thought darkly. Like him having to console Pepper while she cried over Phil's untimely demise at the god's hands. Or Pepper reminding him how it had proved her point about the risks that Iron Man faced when the god had choked and thrown him out a window to plunge ninety stories to what should have been his certain death. Or Pepper's initial upset over him even agreeing to house the psychotic murdering fucker in exchange for information that the bastard refused to give him. He hadn't even answering one damn question of substance no matter who asked him.

That was a something...

"Jarvis, what is our favorite Norse prisoner doing right now?" Tony asked, glaring at the logo on his whiskey bottle a moment before tipping it back and taking another good long pull.

"Loki has forty-seven more minutes left of his exercise period before he has to return to the

containment area sir.”

“Does he?” he purred, nice and low, “Jarvis, please get the Mark 15 ready to roll will you.”

OoooO

As Loki flipped forwards, coming down in a deep crouch that seamlessly spun into a kick, he had an epiphany.

Mortal bodies are crap.

Well perhaps it was not really an epiphany; after all it was not so much a sudden leap of understanding, but rather prevailing knowledge of how little he currently had to work with physically. But at least those strange low shoes that Jarvis found for him were helping to keep his feet from slipping and his mortal knees from hurting when he exercised now. Not that Loki had really wanted to spend the money for them. But Jarvis had insisted that they were specifically designed for the conditions that Loki was exercising under and would not authorize a less expensive type of shoe.

Stark’s reaction to that particular skill had amused him, there was no way that anyone could grow up to be a second prince and not know how to balance a ledger book. If there was a way to make the numbers come out in his favor, Loki knew how to do it. After all it was many years ago when he suddenly stopped having lessons with Thor and Odin and started having them with the exchequer and the chancellor. Oh at first of course he was trained with their new clerks, but later he received his lessons directly from the men holding those positions. If there was a way to negotiate a savings that would benefit Asgard or the court, then Loki knew it.

And Loki was determined to use his skills to make his mother’s payment last as far as possible, since he had no idea of how much trouble it would cause for her if she had to tap into funds other than those supplied by her bridal estates. Obviously there was unrest in the court if she was personally guaranteeing the cost of his incarceration, so he needed to make sure he didn’t put such a charge on her finances that she would have to apply to Odin or the council for relief.

So Loki would do everything he could to reduce the drain on her purse, even if that means doing menial labor like cleaning or laundry. No matter how degrading he found it personally as a Prince of Asgard, until he was told by his mother that it wasn’t necessary he would fight for every savings he could think of.

It’s not like I am the crown prince after all, he thought sourly, having no illusions that second princes got stuck with more of the day to day drudgery.

Wrenching his thoughts away from his financial situation, mortal limitations and Thor, Loki settled into a mid-paced run, circling the floor as he tried to concentrate on the music that was playing. The nothingness of losing himself in the rhythm was much better than getting sucked down again in negative thoughts. Tonight’s song was called ‘Barracuda’ and while the beat was not as strong as last night’s song, ‘Bring me to Life’, at least it didn’t have any uncomfortable lyrics. Not that Loki would ever mention that to Jarvis, he merely accepted his suggestions and he tried not to give any hints about his preferences or what he was thinking of if he could help it.

But uncomfortable lyrics or not, since Jarvis didn’t charge him for music and was even helpful enough to suggest songs with suitable beats, Loki always listened to it when he exercised. Jarvis had suggested that the proper tempo in a song would help give the motivation that was missing when he had to exercise alone. He was right of course, but Loki would have accepted the suggestion even if it hadn’t. For a long time he had been so starved any kind of ongoing audible

stimuli that every time Jarvis' voice broke the silence it surprised him so badly he was hard pressed to cover up his response.

Pathetic, a Prince of Asgard becoming so upset he felt faint just from normal speech. In fact after the first few months of almost absolute silence and being sick almost every other day, he almost broke down in tears of gratitude when Jarvis offered him the music. He hadn't of course, but Loki was uncomfortably aware of how close he had been to losing control.

Other than when he had been learning to read, Jarvis seldom spoke to him unless it was to relay one of the increasingly scarce questions from Stark or negotiate one of the agreements Loki was trying to get approved.

Stupid mortal, if he wasn't going to answer Stark's questions in person, why he would think he would do it when Jarvis asked?

Doors opened and shut without comment, and unless Loki was sick or he was trying to wake him up from a nightmare Jarvis seldom spoke to Loki. Of course once or twice a month he spoke with Ms. Potts, Doctor Banner or Tony Stark, sometimes in person if his wretched body was sick, but more often through a speaker in the ceiling of his cell. He almost missed Thor's incessant babbling.

Almost.

Ms. Potts, Midgardians seldom used the title of lady he had learned, had been kind during his illness. Stark...

Stark had been attentive enough... in a Thor kind of way.

Was Stark actually worried that Loki's mortal body was having so many problems? No of course not. Was he upset that Loki being stubborn was interfering with what he wanted from Loki? Yes, of course he was.

His behavior was extremely Thor'ish, with perhaps more than a touch of Sif's hateful bile when thwarted.

"Oh come on," Tony had whined like an over tired five year old. "I know you've read all the papers on the work being done on the Einstein-Rosen bridge that I sent down to you, Jarvis watched you. Hell you read them several times, just tell me what you think?"

"No, I can't discuss that," Tony huffed. "Look asshole, just once I'd like to get an answer out of you. Who knows, maybe if you answered a few of my questions, I'd be more inclined to answer yours."

"What the fuck?! Look I don't know how you do it in fairy-land, but here? People don't normally try to piss off their jailor. I have to provide you with medical care, but no one says it has to be effective care! Just answer the fucking questions or you can go back to spewing your guts every other day!" Tony bellowed, striking the glass wall with a fist and then kicking it a time or two for good measure.

Sometimes it only took a few minutes of Stark clutching at his already messy brown hair and cursing before he left. Other times Stark would stay on the other side of the glass for an hour or two insulting him, badgering him, alternately cajoling, threatening and whining at him. Asking Loki variations of the same questions trying to annoy Loki in the hopes that he would slip up and accidentally answer.

That was not going to happen. His patience had been tried and tested by centuries of having to deal with Thor, Odin and Fandral. Which is not to say that Loki had not completely thrown caution to the winds and let situations escalate more than a time or two over his long life. He had of course, but the absolutely appalling consequences of him losing his temper, had long taught the futility of that form of stress release.

Of course he had been tempted many, many times. Twice Stark had Jarvis shut off all the lights so he couldn't read anymore and forced Loki to spend the night listening to some loud raucous excuse for music all night long. The only time he could have hidden in dark and not worried about maintaining his mask while he slept, he couldn't sleep for the headache inducing noise that continued until breakfast.

That come to think of it was also fairly Thor'ish behavior. If you were not doing what Thor wanted, he would find ways to annoy and harass hoping you would give into his plans. Loki's only luck there was that Thor had the attention span of an ill-trained puppy. Stark while giving the appearance of flightiness was fairly tenacious for a mortal.

Loki decided to vary his run with some forward rolls and kicks. While he hated it, he had to admit that his mortal body was responding much better than it had even a few months ago. He waited until the music came back to the beginning of the song and then launched into a fairly ambitious routine of jumps, lunges, flips and kicks while still maintaining forward progression. All he needed were garments in his house colors and a set of ankle chimes and he would be as ready for a festival performance as any mortal could be.

After a few reverse vaults as a finale he twirled and took a few sweeping bows to his non-existent audience, making sure to keep them outrageously, theatrically over the top in the best of festival tradition.

Shaking his arms and legs loose, he once again began to lope around the exercise area, this time going in the opposite direction, letting his body do the work while his mind wandered.

At one point, early on, Loki had wondered if the absolute lack of outside noise was a conditioning attempt of some sort that Stark was inflicting on him to make him desperate to talk to him. But Jarvis had recently let it slip that he could ask for his nightly song at any volume he wanted since the entire building was 'sound proofed' to prevent noise from annoying people in other parts of the building.

Of course since he had started getting an exercise time Jarvis had been speaking to him more often, but mostly in the nature of command or warnings. Small things like 'Mister Odinson, you have twenty minutes left until your exercise period is over' or 'please return to your room and put your cuff on' with the occasional 'that load is ready for the dryer' if he zoned out during work.

Loki had found that if he exercised hard before his evening confinement and then took a warm shower he could sometimes be tired and relaxed enough to really sleep. Not always, but it did help him not be so restless. Of course he had been sleeping better since Doctor Banner had switched his medicine to something he claimed would help both the panic attacks and the nightmares. One change had been he more often had nightmares about events that should legitimately cause them rather than them being triggered by dreams of odd random everyday life with his family.

When he wasn't busy having nightmares triggered by them, he missed his family so badly he could barely breath. So no change there he thought wryly. No matter what they distressed him. It was funny how something didn't change.

But still... While he had often chaffed under Odin's degrees he couldn't imagine doing anything

that would warrant this type of sentence.

Unless... Loki's breath caught painfully, causing him to stumble. No. Surely Odin was not dead. After a few minutes of mindless dread his common sense kicked in. If he had conspired with people who wanted Odin dead, the punishment would have been to be summarily executed, not shipped to another realm for imprisonment.

When he had first awoke he had suspected that Stark was holding him for ransom or some Midgardian political gain, but he has seen contract. Even if the contract was fake, which he didn't believe for a second, he had been here too long for something like that. So Loki figured that he was on Midgard due to some sort of palace revolt or treason as a political prisoner, that was the only thing he could think of that would result in missing memories, no contact from his family and being on a seldom visited realm.

Of course one thing Loki couldn't figure out was how long he would be here. He wondered how long it would be before something happened to let to give him a clue or at least break the monotony of his day to day existence.

As if on cue, as he emerged from the area behind the elevator shaft he noticed a strange shimmering in near his projected path. Odd...

In the few steps it took Loki to slow down, the shimmering blinked out and he only had enough time to think of what deep shit he was in before he launched into an attack

Chapter End Notes

And that is that. Let me know what you think.

Stealth

Chapter Summary

The sugar hits the fan so to speak. Did you know that Tony's tower has trigger happy security guards?

Chapter Notes

Chapter three of Seven of your Christmas Pressie.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 16 – Stealth

“Sir, I really don’t think this is a good idea.”

“Yeah? Well guess what Jarvis, I happen to think it is a great idea, so zip it.” Tony ground out belligerently as the elevator moved down the special ‘Guest’ level. Stupid name, but Pepper insisted that he use it on all files, emails and conversations.

The elevator doors opened silently, Jarvis over riding the chiming notification and Tony quietly stepped out into the security entrance. Fortunately the Mark 15 not only had chameleon camouflage technology, but it was slimmer and lighter and was actually able to be stealthy. If you really looked at it of course you could see something, but it was more like a heat wave ripple of something not quite right rather than an image that could be instantly identified. A quick glance in his direction wouldn’t really show anything attention getting.

He was darkly amused to note that the music level was high enough that he could have clomped in wearing one of his heavy suits and no one would have noticed. As the elevator doors slid open, Tony crossed in front of Loki’s work area. A prison sweat shop in his tower. Fuck. He would have given the annoying shit anything he had wanted if he had just cooperated a bit. Okay, so maybe he had kinda forgotten the guy was even here, six days out of seven, but he had been pretty busy. Stuff like his company having sales contractions for the first time in forever or the problems with getting the Arc Reactors certified in the EU as an equivalent to a regular power plant rather than them trying to tie Stark industries up like they were trying to build a nuclear power plant or some damn thing.

But hey, who cares about that, he thought. Pepper was totally on top of getting the regulations changed, and he Tony Stark would beat Jane Foster in building a functional Einstein-Rosen bridge, it was a race, but she was barely out of the starting gate. First he wanted to go from one end of the planet to another, to build interest and assure funding, then easily go to earth’s satellites for servicing, god wouldn’t that rake in the dough. And then... who knew? However far they could get in the universe. First as Stark International Transport and then later as Stark Galactic Transport. And all he had to do was convince Frigga’s baby boy that he was done fucking around with him and it was time to play nice or Uncle Tony was going to flip his shit.

Tony stood there a moment, his bad mood not eliminated, but temporarily set aside as he got caught up in the whole engineering goodness of it all. He had Jane Foster's papers of course. Hell she sent them to him to ask his opinion on them, he would of course make sure she was cut in for her fair share of the money and credit, but Tony was determined that his name was going to also be on the patent when it was filed. And of course Stark International was going to be the one reaping the benefits. Definitely not Hammer Industries or whatever fucking 'do nothing' joke of a low bidder the government would pick if they controlled the patent. Nope, his company was going to build them and His company was going to run them. Besides, Tony's always wanted a Wonder of the World named after him and that is exactly what the first intergalactic gate will be.

And all he had to do was make nice with Frigga's pride and joy. Hell if he helped Tony figure this out, Jane wouldn't be the only one compensated. Loki could have his own island as a prison with hot and cold running hookers for all Tony cared.

Of course it was a good thing Tony wasn't thinking too much about where the thoughts of scantily clad hookers were coming from... other than the bottom of a bottle of whisky of course... as he stood there he couldn't help but be pretty fucking mesmerized by the sweat covered limber body that ducked and weaved and frankly made a few moves that he wasn't sure a mortal body was should be capable of... the boy from Asgard was very impressive. Not all muscle-y and burley Thor impressive, rather more lean and elegant premier ballerina or world class gymnast, Loki'ish impressive.

He had told Jarvis to save these exercise sessions, to a secure server of course like everything concerning his guest, but Tony was maybe rethinking this and wondering how Stark International could market the damn things, Exercise with a Megalomaniac? Get that Celtic guy to create a musical score and brand them as Asgardian Dance? Heck either one teased on YouTube would immediately climb to the top of the Amazon DVD rankings.

Wait, did he just even seriously think that? Okay... maybe a bit too much booze this afternoon, so chalk it up to that and let's not go to go there right now. But who knows, maybe later? After all, the guy was going to be here a while, he might be up for it someday. Tony watched for about twenty minutes until Loki broke out of his dance routine or whatever it was and diva'd several overly complicated bows to his invisible friends before switching to a quick step jog of some sort.

Tony flipped up his visor and stepped forward several paces. "Hey Reindeer Games, I want to talk to you a few minutes."

Shit.

Shit, shit, shit!

Where Tony previously had a blissfully unaware sweaty ex-Norse god jogging around the floor... In mid step for crying out loud, Loki rolled forward smacking his heels hard against Tony's armored midsection and using that leverage to back flip away from Tony. While it didn't really hurt, it did jar the suit enough to make Tony's alcohol abused stomach want to hurl.

Swallowing hard, Tony angrily shouted, "Hey, settle down. I just want to talk to you."

Loki had landed lightly and took off running in the opposite direction of Tony, not that he was worried about that, there really wasn't anywhere for him to go now that the security snafu's had all be corrected and were now under Jarvis' control.

Loki disappeared behind the central elevator shaft where Tony couldn't see him. Possibly retreating to his room, which Tony would be totally cool with. Loki would be locked up behind glass and

Tony could take off the suit and talk to him. Get some shit ironed out. Maybe yell at him a bit. Bribe him a little. Who knows?

“Jarvis if he heads to his room, lock him in for me okay?”

“Of course sir,” the AI replied. A few moments later he said, “Sir, he’s grabbed his sweatshirt from the floor and is headed towards the emergency stairs.”

“Okay Jarv, I got it, just make sure this floor stays locked down.”

“Very good si--”

“Sir, he’s just opened up the door emergency stairs!” The AI... yelped. Who knew that Jarvis could yelp? Interesting, but Tony had other priorities right now.

“What the fuck Jarvis! I told you to make sure the emergency exits were locked when he was out of his cell!” Tony shouted, moving as fast as he could in a suit not exactly designed for indoor use. Or at least not indoor use if you cared about your floor surfaces.

“I don’t understand sir, the door was locked, but he somehow opened it and went through.”

Cursing, Tony made his way to the door, having to wait a moment for Jarvis to open it for him. As he reached for it, a small scrap of paper that had been stuck to it at waist level floated to the floor. Interesting, but Tony had no time for that now. “Up or down Jarv?”

“Down sir, at quite some speed I might add.”

Crap, there were a lot more floors below him, than there were above. Also he could have carefully flew up the narrow stairs, going down would be a bit trickier. “Jarv, there is a scrap of paper on the floor by the emergency stair door, please send Dummy or Minion to retrieve it.” Tony decided to try hopping down the stairs and using a short blast of his repulsors to go from half landing to half landing.

“I’m not sure if that paper is important but I want it just in case.”

“At once sir.”

“Loki! Damn it, Stop! Come back here. Now!” Tony shouted.

Like shouting ‘come back here’ was going to work, he thought sourly.

After about the fifth hop, he was starting to get the hang of step jumping. It wasn’t as fast as flying, but it was faster than him trying to lumber down the steps with his suit on... And a lot easier on the building.

“Sir! That paper might be part of a spell of some sort. Mister Odinson is about nine floors below you. He’s put on his sweat shirt, zipped it up and has pulled a small handful of paper scraps out of each pocket. He licked one and held it to his temple a moment, before whispering to another and tossing it down on the stairs. A heavy block fog is issuing from it as it descends the stairwell.

“On it Jarvis.” Tony called, flipping his visor down and calling up thermal imaging displays.

“Sir you may want to seal your face plate and go to filtered air. There is no telling if the blackout smoke is comprised of any sort of noxious product or not.”

Tony pressed down harder and heard the hiss of seals being tested. “Good idea, Jarvis see if you

can vent this shit. But not through the building's internal air, direct to outside just in case."

"Of course--. Sir! The door on the fifty-third floor has just opened."

"What the hell is on that floor?" Tony asked, trying to hop faster.

"Bid Proposals are by the stairs. I can't tell if he exited the stair well sir, but there is a cloud of black fog moving and extending towards the central area." Jarvis paused a moment, and while I can no longer hear him on the stairs, I can't hear him in the office area either."

A trick possibly, Tony thought. "Anyone on that floor?"

"None that I can see, everyone assigned to that level is logged off, so the floor should be empty."

Unless they logged off and didn't go home yet, Tony thought bitterly. Or someone on the janitorial or maintenance crew is up there. Or someone who forgot a file or coat or phone came back to get it.

Happy was right, they did need key carding on all the floors and elevators.

Fuck.

What a pain in the ass that will be. And Happy? Worse. He was always the smuggest bastard in the world when his genius boss finally had to admit the he was wrong and Happy was right.

Double Fuck.

"Well, just let me know if anything happens there Jarvis. The only thing we can do is keep an eye on that floor as best we can. If he is up there maybe we'll get lucky and the bastard will slip up." He leapt down to the next landing, "I'm going to stay in the stairwell. I could be wrong and he could have thought of some way being higher up will help, but I just can't imagine what he could do being trapped on a floor too high up to escape from."

"Yes sir."

Tony concentrated on his leaping, which was not nearly as much fun when he was actually worried about damaging his own property. He swore in his next building he was making all the stair wells large enough to fly in, or at least do quarter landings with an open center box so he could just do a slow drop down the middle of the damn things. He was just about to tell Jarvis to make a note for his next building to have open wells large enough for his suit when the AI spoke.

"Sir! The door for the forty-second floor has opened. I did see Mr. Odinson for brief moment just entering before he was hidden again by black fog and again there is a cloud of black fog moving and extending towards the central area."

"Fuck! Anyone on that floor Jarvis?"

"Yes sir, I have told everyone it is a localized problem that is being contained and asked them to evacuate via the elevator, avoiding the stairs. I also sounded a localized alarm through my speakers so that no one thinks they need to trigger a real fire alarm."

"Oh thank god Jarv, try to get everyone in the elevator and off that floor before the fog gets anywhere near the elevator," Tony said his voice cracking slightly. ""Good work keeping them away from the fire alarms, that's all we need is the fire department and the police showing up here just as the Bane of New York pops out an elevator."

Tony had just about made it to the forty-second floor, when Jarvis reported to him that the black fog had rolled over the people waiting to get on the elevator to evacuate.

“Any screaming on the elevator Jarvis?” the billionaire asked apprehensively.

“No sir, a lot of loud chatter and some low grade alarm, but nothing to indicate than anyone is in distress.” Jarvis reported soothingly.

“As long as no one is screaming, slow up the elevator as much as you can without stopping it, I want to meet it on the main floor.”

Tony started hopping faster and occasionally smacking into a wall. The drywall guys were going to be pretty busy by the time he made it to the ground floor.

But as fast as Tony was, apparently a psychotic god in tennis shoes was faster.

“Sir, a door has opened on the ninth floor and the black fog is making its way from the stairwell. I have instituted an evacuation of this floor also.”

Fuck again.

While he didn't want anything to tip off the authorities, Tony was thinking that he should have just evacuated the whole building from git-go.

“Fine, fine,” he huffed, throwing caution and carefulness to the wind and just slamming from one landing to the next. Blind jumping works a lot better when he has time to consult the blueprint on his HUD. Since he currently doesn't have the time to make those jumps, he tearing up walls yes, but also scrapping the hell out of his suit.

He isn't sure what is going on with the other floors, he suspects it is little more than a decoy move on the god's part. One that is causing Tony a lot of trouble and one he doesn't intend to fall for since by now he is now pretty sure that Loki has no intention of leaving the stairwell. Tony just hopes he doesn't kill the guy by accident slamming into him in the dark.

Because if Loki was going to die today, Tony would like it to be on purpose so he can enjoy it when it occurs. Tony resolutely turned his thoughts away from the idea of how nice it would be if he could be the one who killed the annoying ex-deity.

What the hell is this fog composed of that it doesn't allow Jarvis' thermal cameras to work, he wondered. Damn it's a shame I'm not still in the weapons business, I could have found a use for it.

“Only two more landings till the exit on the main floor sir, the lower door has not been opened,” Jarvis informed him.

“If you don't find him on the last landing, I will hold the elevators until you get there and open them one at a time on your command.”

“Okay thanks buddy,” Tony said. The last few flights he had been holding his arms wide, brushing the walls trying to make sure if there is someone standing there in the blackout fog where he can't see them, he will at least be able to feel them.

OoooO

While runes might not be his preferred kind of magic, they were all he has left right now so Loki is making the best of them. And he has a lot of them to make best of. All hidden in the pouch pockets

of the fleece jacket he had been given. The right hand pocket held scraps of paper with runes on them to open any locked items; the left hand pocket had a few flat scraps with runes on them allowing him to see clearly in all circumstances... Pockets? Pouches? Midgardian clothing was so strange.

At any rate he also had several small dove like creatures made of folded paper with runes that can be activated to make them to fly in the direction they were tossed and latch onto the first person they found. Of course their wings also had runes calling for an impenetrable fog, which they would carry with them in their quest. Quite a tidy bit of rune casting if Loki has to say so himself.

Oh, the runes to make the paper birds fly and the fog runes were straight forward. When he wanted them to work all he had to do was say the proper words to activate them and breathe life to them. But figuring out how to use runes pre-drawn on paper rather than being drawn on the item affected was a nice adaptation. The ones to open anything locked or closed and the ones to grant him sight in any circumstance, those took a bit of thought. But writing the runes backwards and then moistening them so the ink had a medium to touch the rune with the actual item being affected worked fairly well.

Even if the way he was using the runes wasn't something that was normally done. Loki surely never cared about being conventional in the past, and he wasn't about to start now. Although it certainly wasn't a very elegant application method, Loki's old Rune Master would have been appalled. Using strange mass produced mortal ink? Wood pulp paper? Saliva instead of blood or any other precious bodily fluid? The old fool would be in a complete lather over such antics. While Loki also appreciated elegant solutions to problems, he was also very much okay with practical ones if the circumstances called for it.

It hadn't been easy testing his theories with that Jarvis watching him day and night, but he did manage to accomplish it. Not with the 'Open' rune obviously, but other runes that could be inconspicuously tested while he was perfecting his technique. So not knowing when he would use them, he had been prepared for the last several weeks. Since his mother had gone to such lengths to place him here, he'd decided to stay for as long as he was still learning about Midgard, able to strengthen his mortal body and stay unharmed. Mortal or not he kept telling himself, he still had some time that could be spent waiting and learning.

Measured time. Limited measured time.

Loki had refused to allow himself to hope that his mother would appear to tell him what was going on. Anytime the thought of his mother or his impending mortal death intruded he ruthlessly banished it from his thoughts. He just couldn't afford to wallow in either hopeless sentiment or despair. Of course there could be a good reason for all that he was currently experiencing, but then again just as easily it could turn out that he was imprisoned and sentenced to death for exactly the reasons he feared.

So Loki did what he always did, he planned and prepared.

Loki was ready to respond when Stark appeared out of nowhere to attack him. Actually he was amazed it had taken the man this long. Loki could have defended himself with a few lethal runes, but there was always the chance that he had mistaken the situation or that some of his runes would fail. The chance of failure was slight, but not one he cared to risk his now fragile life over. So in the event of a miscarriage of his plans, he could not provoke the man or his associates into doing him permanent harm.

When Stark appeared, Loki had avoided a fight and choose flight. Licking one of his 'Open' rune scraps, allowing his living breath to wash over it, he affixed it to the door holding it flat with his

palm and whispering the words of activation. There were so many ways this could have gone wrong. The rune could have not activated, the door could have been protected against spells by an Asgardian mage, the door could have been made of a naturally resistant material. Anything could have gone wrong.

But it didn't, Loki thought smugly. While he had never advertised it, he had always had a gift for the more passive forms of power.

Running down the stairs he pulled one of the flat runes for clear sight out of his other pocket, licking and holding it to his temple while he whispered the release words. After that it was simplicity its self. Activating two of his fog birds, he sent one flying down the stairs spreading darkness in its wake, the other he held, allowing a dense fog form around him as he fled down the stairs. By the time he heard Stark crashing through the door, he imagined that the stair well was filled with enough darkness to foil Jarvis' eyes, so he tossed the bird back in Stark's direction. If the spell recognized him as a living creature, which was by no means assured since he was covered head to toe in metal, it would attach itself to him. But even if his construct didn't attach to Stark, the darkness and other concealment attributes of the rune would be reinforced in the stairway.

Three more times Loki used the runes to open doors, releasing birds to spread darkness and confusion. After releasing the first, he had quickly taken off his shoes and tucked them in the waist band of his pants so he couldn't be heard as he ran lightly down the steps in his socks. The fog would interfere with all forms of vision except for his and should Jarvis cut out the lights, his clear vision rune would allow him to see in the dark.

However muffling sound was another rune for another day, so making sure Jarvis couldn't track him by sound was important, so Loki made sure to run lightly and to silence his breathing. He was already skilled at stealth running, but he had been perfecting those skills for the last few weeks.

The third door Loki opened, he had actually slipped through keeping it from closing all the way. He could hear the consternation his construct and the fog were causing as it found a host and he could hear Stark lumbering down the stairs behind the mostly closed door. Waiting a few seconds for Stark to pass, Loki slipped back out the door into the black fog filled stairway and made his silent, soft, sock footed way down the stairs behind him.

OoooO

Tony smacked hard into the wall in front of him.

Fuck.

He was on the ground floor and there was no Loki, nor had Jarvis reported the ground floor door opening.

"Jarvis, any chance he went down to the parking garage?" Tony wasn't sure if he was hopeful of this or not. On one hand there would be way more places for Loki to hide, behind cars, under cars, behind pillars, fuck, inside cars that weren't locked, up in the mechanicals tucked in various shafts. Lots and lots of places. On the other hand there were no people down there, so no one to worry about Loki hurting anyone as he tried to escape.

"I don't think so sir, the door leading down to the lower levels hasn't been opened, nor is there any smoke in the lower stair well."

"Okay... Where then?"

“I’m not sure, sir. Perhaps he is still in the stairwell?”

“Crap”

“Sir,” the AI’s called urgently, “the elevator was called to the ninth floor.”

Tony hit the panic bar on the exit door barreling out to the side of the first floor lobby heading towards the central bank of elevators. “Bring it down Jarvis, override any stops to any other floors. And try to find out who is inside. I want you to let them out one at a time. Tell the lobby guards to be careful there is possibly a maniac loose in the building, one with some pretty slick kung-fu moves. Describe what Loki is wearing, but don’t tell them his name.”

OoooO

Loki stopped a few steps from the bottom, as Stark paused for a minute at the last landing, holding himself absolutely still as the man turned and looked back up the stairway, before taking a half step to the side and looking down a short hallway to a door marked Garage Stairs with a small arrow point down. He made a few agitated movements with his hands before spinning around and throwing the door marked Lobby – Main Exit open and rushing through it.

Before the door could close Loki slipped through right behind him. Stark apparently was not human seeming enough for the bird to have attached itself to him or perhaps the rune had already expended itself. But fortunately for Loki, he could see hazy swirls that let him know that enough of the fog escaped through the open door to at least confuse things for another minute or two. Especially since he held the door open to allow it to escape, using the fog cover to hide him long enough to slip his trainers back on and find an exit.

Loki debated letting off a few more birds so he could stealthily make his way out of the building, but the multi-story area was too large to fill with fog even if he set off multiple birds, and besides, he might need them later.

So taking a large breath and sending a quick plea to the Norms, Loki let go of the door and sprinted to the glass door several dozen yards away. The entrance area was almost empty and he could see through the huge glass walls that it was almost sunset, which he supposed would account for the lack of people on the street outside. He was perhaps only a few yards from the door when a shout rang out.

“Stop! Stop right now or we’ll shoot.”

Loki slid to the floor, just as the door in front of him bucked in its frame. A large flower like flaw appeared on the door, perhaps two feet up from the floor.

“Are you fucking crazy?! I want you to stay away from him, not kill him!” a voice roared.

Loki scrambled to his feet and pushed through the door, staying low and slipping past a woman that was halfway out of the second set of doors a few body lengths away, she was so stunned looking back towards the disturbance, she never even glanced down at him.

The sidewalks might have been fairly empty, but the roads surrounding the building were still teaming with transports. Sprinting to the corner, was able to cross without stopping by threading his way carefully through a scattering of pedestrians that the transports had stopped for. Although his entire being rebelled against it, he slowed down enough not to knock anyone over; he didn’t want any screams drawing attention to his flight. As soon as he reached the other side of the road, the sidewalks were more sparsely populated and he took off at top speed intending to turn at the

next break in the buildings. He glanced back as he turned the corner and saw Stark's metal amour hovering a dozen feet above the ground looking in his direction.

Marvelous.

The Norms really, really hated him; the damn armor was flight capable.

Sprinting around the corner, Loki jiggled his way through a gap in the transports making it to the other side of the street with only one near death incident. Halfway down the length of buildings, he saw a transport come out of a narrow alley. He didn't think he could make it to the end of the block before Stark could catch up with him, so the alley was definitely worth investigating. Perhaps there would be somewhere to hide there, or an open door he could dart into. Norms knew right now he'd settle for a bunch of rubbish bins to hide behind until pursuit had past him.

Chapter End Notes

Just for the record.... This was a phenomenally bad idea. But as you know, it is impossible to tell Tony anything sometimes.

Flight!

Chapter Summary

An ex-god of Asgard on the loose in NYC. This does not make for a happy Tony.

Chapter Notes

Chapter Four of Seven of your Christmas Pressie.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 17 – Flight!

“Sir! Loki is heading towards the main doors!”

“On it Jarvis. Release the elevators.” Tony spun and headed towards the doors, cursing as one of the lobby guards stepped away from the reception desk and shouted.

“Stop! Stop right now or we’ll shoot.”

And then the bastard did! Luckily for Tony’s heart, Loki had dove forward when the guard shouted so the bullet aimed at his leg flew over him. Tony flashed on how painful death by electro-hammer would have been as the bullet struck the door only a few inches above the god’s head. Not a lot of an improvement in Tony’s opinion but at least the bastard wasn’t dead or suffering from a ‘Oh Christ I have to have an Insane Mass Murderer rushed to a local hospital’ gunshot wound.

“Are you fucking crazy?!” Tony screamed at the guard, “I want you to stay away from him, not kill him!” He ran across the floor, no doubt causing the night cleaning crew a ton of extra work as his boots scratched up the polished stone floor. “Jarvis authorize over time for the floor crew and tell me which way he went!” He shouted as he barreled out the doors, right behind some woman scrambling to get out of his way.

Fucking hey.

“He turned right sir.”

Tony turned towards the right but couldn’t immediately see Loki. As soon as he figured the woman he had followed out the door was far enough away he hit his repulsors hard, rising up a story or two for an unimpeded view.

“Jarvis, he crossed the street and is turning left at the next corner, see if you can access him on any security cameras over that way.” Tony said as streaked through the air following the god.

Just as Tony flew around the corner he saw Loki half way down the block, before he could get to him the god dove into an alley.

Tony’s heart dropped when he heard brakes screech and a horn blare...

Please let there be need for screams, he prayed.

Tony turned into the narrow alley just in time to see a car still rocking from a hard stop about a hundred feet away and tall dark godling leaping like a gazelle from the car's hood onto its roof.

Tony hit his thrusters hard and nabbed Loki around his waist in midair just as the god was about to jump off the car's roof onto its trunk. Carrying an arm load of struggling mischief maker Tony headed straight up away from any prying eyes or security cameras, flying up into the darkening sky with the now screaming god.

For a moment Tony thought the god might have been injured from the impact when Tony grabbed him, but if he was, that wasn't what he was screaming about.

"Let me go you gibbering monkey!" Loki yelled, banging his elbows backwards trying to strike Tony's neck.

Not that his attempt would have done anything, well maybe bruised Loki's elbows. He then started screaming stuff about Tony being the son of a diseased whore and a defiler of animals and really lots and lots of cursing without using any words that Tony could really identify as swear words in and of themselves. Tony just flew higher, intending to get them out of the range roof top camera wielders. There are a lot more sunset photographers than you would think in New York. Pictures of Iron Man flying have been on more than enough Facebook pages for Tony to be well aware of just how many there are.

After a minute or two Tony is high enough to feel safe. While it hasn't taken very long to get beyond camera range it was a long enough period of time for a screaming Norse god to get on his last god damned nerve.

Pun achieved, but not intended, he thought before turning his attention to the irritation at hand.

"Will you just shut the fuck up already?" he finally demanded.

"Láta mig fara, þú hóra ódýr: Slepptu mér, ódýra hóra!" Loki screamed kicking his heels against Tony's shins. It didn't hurt, but it was as annoying as hell.

Why Flawed Design switched languages Tony has no idea. "Javis any idea what he is saying?"

"I'm not sure sir, possibly he wants you to be let go, I'm not sure what he rest was."

"Well, it's probably wasn't nice," Tony said as he tried to decide if he was far enough away from anyone who might have watched him take off with a passenger. "He's already told me I have sexual congress with unwilling animals and my mother was a woman of negotiable affection."

"Yes sir, I did hear that those ones."

"Sir, the police have arrived at the tower, they want to know what is going on."

Tony sighed, "Jarvis, tell them that I found a homeless maniac in the building threatening people, he took off and I lost him when he ducked down into the subway."

"Let me go you poisonous bunch-back'd bilgesnipe!"

"Look Princess you need to shut the fuck up 'cause you have already pissed me off big time. You scream one more thing at me and I will fuckin' drop you. Oh and Jarvis, tell them I want to buy a dozen tickets to their next charity event."

“You brainless oaf! Let me go!”

“And now you have totally pissed me off,” Tony said flatly, opening his arms to let gravity take the god.

“Sir, are you sure this is a wise idea sir?” Jarvis chided him gently.

“Of course it is Jarvis, the police will be happy and I’ll be able to give them to some of the office staff.” Tony said snidely as he swung around and heading back the way he had just came.

“Very amusing sir, I meant dropping Mister Odinson.”

“Relax Jarvis; I’ll snag him up again before he freaks out. Well freaks out any more than he already had that is.” Tony calculated an intersection angle for where the god should be falling and was surprised to find out that Loki was instead heading back the way Tony had just come from.

Loki’s arms and legs were spread and he had his hoodie unzipped and was using it like... like... glider wings.

“What the hell? How is he even keeping his jacket on? Who does he think he is? Rocky the Flying Fucking Squirrel?!” Tony cursed angrily, his personal panic lending a sharp edge to fear for the ex-god’s safety.

Of course Loki knew how to free fall. His brother flew for Christ’s sake.

Tony wondered how many bets the asshole had won by evading his brother’s attempts to catch him before making it to a lake.

Or even a soft hillside, Tony thought, remembering when Thor had first thrown the younger god out of a plane without inflicting any injuries on him.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Tony screamed as he flew past Loki unable to grab him when the god suddenly curled up into a small ball and literally dropped out from under his out stretched arms.

Oh my god. And not the crazy one I’m trying to catch.

The penny had finally dropped for Tony. Loki was trying to get to the reservoir; he was going to try to dive into the reservoir. Pretty workable plan for an escaping god, not so much for someone in a mortal body.

“You’ll never survive it,” Tony screamed using every external speaker on full, not caring one bit if anyone overheard him. “Mortal bodies can’t survive even a water landing from this height!”

He caught a glimpse of a shocked white face twisted and staring up at him as he spun back towards the once again spread out and free falling god.

“I’m telling you, hitting the water at this speed will kill you!”

Loki looked up at the screaming man in his metal suit, from the expressions flickering across his face he was obviously trying to decide if Tony was telling the truth.

Stark had turned and was once again on course to grab him. He could see, the split second when Loki had either decided he was lying or more ominously decided it didn’t matter. The insane god threw himself forward in an angled dive that dropped him so quickly that Stark once again couldn’t

reach him as he flew past.

“Are you insane!” Tony shrieked firing off energy blasts from his hands and feet, going into a powered dive. Loki was running out of time and altitude, Tony had to get him soon.

“You don’t heal like you used to anymore,” Tony bellowed, trying to put something, anything into his voice to convince the plummeting god to believe him. He hit his thrusters hard, trying to get far enough below the god to try coming up on him at an angle that would be impossible to evade with just momentum.

The trick of course being not to fall so far that Tony didn’t have enough time for his repulsors to keep him from spitting onto one of the rapidly approaching buildings. He most likely would be fine, his passenger, not so much.

“Loki, if it doesn’t kill you out right, you’ll spend the rest of your life in pain as a helpless cripple!”

Oh.

Well that seemed to have worked. Loki looked down at him with real horror; the idea of painful permanent crippling was apparently something he had forgotten was possible. Granted the god had spent centuries in an invincible death-resistant body, but he had to remember he didn’t have that body anymore. Just like the rest of Earthgard he was going to experience life in the new realm of a mortal existence that included lots of potential pain.

Which admittedly sucked if you had previously been an impervious god.

Loki had just enough time to look down at him with abject terror before Tony hit every thruster he could, managing to snag the god’s torso with a rib creaking hit and gain a little altitude.

Okay, so he didn’t immediately gain altitude. There was a bit of heart stopping up blast from the roof of a building they almost fell through. However gravity lost its attempt to ensnare them and Tony made it back up into the air.

“Speakers back to normal.” Tony said, trying not to wheeze. It took a minute for the bands of panic around his chest to loosen, but eventually he was able to gather a much needed deep breath.

Neither of them spoke until Tony shifted his grip on Loki. And even then, the god didn’t speak, he merely groaned, and pushed against Tony’s arms, seemingly not so much trying to escape as to ease the pressure on his chest.

“Look, if I loosen my grip will you promise not to try anything else stupid?” He demanded as he flew them back towards Stark Tower.

Tony could feel the god push again, trying unsuccessfully to get the suit’s arms to move.

“Yes,” the god coughed. “Please.”

So Tony loosed his grip a bit and made a beeline for the penthouse platform. At the last minute he changed his mind and over flew it and instead landed on the terrace outside the entertainment floor. The platform was way too open, an accidental misstep all too possible with two people on it, especially if only one of which was latched into the suit removal system. Especially if only one of them was not potentially suicidal.

As miserable as he was from the bruising on his chest and ribs and as mad as he was at allowing this stupid body's fight or flight instincts over take him, again. There was still no way that Loki was going to pass up the chance to get a look at the outside area of the building he was imprisoned in. He just wished it wasn't so dark out.

He pushed against Stark's armor, trying to get a bit of pressure off his ribs.

"Look, if I loosen my grip will you promise not to try anything else stupid?" The mortal asked him in words he barely heard before they were ripped away by the wind.

Loki coughed and agreed, drawing in painful gulps of air as the hard metal arms loosened enough for him to breathe deeper. The arms were looser, but nowhere near loose enough to allow him to escape again... Or fall.

Not that he intended to try that again. Norns no. It was painful and terrifying and in the rush to escape he had totally forgotten how fragile this damn body was.

Oh, he should have been able to make it to the lake he had seen nestled amongst the trees; Loki had no doubt of that, he and Thor had played this game numerous times. However Stark was much more maneuverable than Thor, so Loki had lost more altitude than he should have trying to evade him. There had been a very real possibility he would have fallen short of his goal. But even if he had made it to the water that much time in a dive rather than a controlled glide would have meant a brutal hit even for his old body. Perhaps not as bad as Stark had claimed, but he couldn't quite be sure.

Disgusted he quit fighting to hold himself stiff against Stark's momentum and allowed his head to bang lightly against the armored shoulder behind him.

"What the fuck were you thinking dude?" Stark growled in his ear.

Honestly Loki couldn't have told him if he had wanted too. But he knew that in this fragile breakable body with no powers to draw on if he miscalculated... So that little trick was too dangerous to try again.

OoooO

"Jarvis, wait until we land and then hit the privacy lights." Tony said, turning in the air before angling his thrusters to allow him to slowly lower them both to the patio area.

The second they landed, Tony shifted his grip to the god's left wrist and Jarvis hit the perimeter lights. The lights were on the outside of the building, low enough down that they didn't light up the patio itself and angled interfere with anyone trying to watch or take pictures of his patio.

"What the fuck do you think you were doing?" he demanded flipping up the face plate on his helmet. "If you had killed yourself your mom and Thor would have probably blasted my entire tower to rubble!"

The god collapsed at his feet declined to answer him, Tony popped a pair of cuffs from one of the suits storage compartments and slapped one end on the wrist he was holding. Loki tried to jerk away, but Tony stepped behind him, reaching over to snare the trickster's other wrist, wrenching it back and encircling it with the other handcuff before placing his gauntleted hand around Loki's upper arm and yanking him up and spinning him around.

"What in the hell was that all about?" He demanded gauntleted hands holding Loki so they were almost nose to nose.

Loki gave a raspy laugh, "It's called an escape attempt Stark. Surely I don't need to explain the concept to you." He let an uncertain look wash across his face, "Or do I?"

"Very funny smart ass," Tony growled glaring at him.

"Wait a minute, Something isn't right here..."

Tony's angry glare morphed into a puzzled inspection.

Loki smirked, raising one brow. "Many things are not currently right in my opinion Stark." he said with a soft chuckle.

Without answering, Tony released one of his arms and hauled him over to the terrace doors.

"Jarvis, release the lower parts of my suit please."

"At once sir," the AI responded over the slight noise of his suit legs retracting away from him.

Tony stepped out of the suit boots and opened the terrace door, pushing Loki ahead of him. Not wanting to take any chance of being spied on he said, "Close all the drapes, lights up full please Jarv." Tony said, shoving Loki further into the large living room before pushing him into one of the overstuffed chairs. "Don't even think of moving until I tell you to," he growled, removing his helmet and setting it on a nearby table.

"You know, you could just ask nicely," Loki said his voice and expression projecting mocking amusement. Something though made Tony think that Loki was a lot less calm than he was trying to project.

"No. I'm done asking nicely. From now on it's more you'll do what you're told." Tony said almost flatly, coming back to stand in front of the god and lifting the trickster's chin with one gauntleted hand before asking in a troubled voice, "Why aren't your eyes bright blue?"

Loki wrenched his face away with a hiss, but it only took a moment for Tony to shake off one gauntlet and recapture Loki's chin with his now bare hand.

"I'm sorry if the color offends you Stark," the god spat, struggling to pull away as Tony turned his head to view Loki's eyes at a different angle.

"How long have they been green?" Tony mused bringing up his other still gauntleted hand to hold Loki's head still at the desired angle. "Jarvis? Check all the pictures we have, oh and check for contacts if you can." He crouched down almost on top of the god, studying his eyes intently for several long moments.

"I'm not kissing you Stark," Loki gritted through his tightly held jaw.

Tony's eyes widened as he realized how close their faces were to each other.

Noting his dismay Loki lifted a teasing brow and managed to move enough to dislodge the hand on his chin, "While I am as adventurous as the next person, you really haven't given me any reason to want to have an intimate encounter with you."

He laughed when Tony leapt back as if struck, "Besides, while it has been some time Stark, I do have standards you know." He cast a dismissive look up and down Tony's partially armored frame. "Although," he said almost contemplatively, "I can see that you try extremely hard to compensate. So you should get points for effort I suppose."

Tony could feel his face turning red, while other areas of him expressed disappointment. Not that he had been thinking that of course, he was in a committed relationship for heaven's sake.

Why the hell am I feeling so flustered? He wondered. *And why is he even thinking that will work to upset me.* Tony was fairly shameless, but then again the god would have no way of knowing that he supposed.

"Ha ha dipshit," Tony retorted, grabbing the front of the god's shirt and jerking him to his feet with his still powered hand.

"Well you are masterful, I'll give you that one," the god said in a warm appreciative voice, which Tony ignored as he spun him around.

Fisting the chain of the handcuff, Tony used his unarmored hand to dive into the right hand pocket of the hoodie pulling out several scraps of scraps of paper which stuffed into his jean pocket. He quickly patted the god down on his right side, making sure he didn't have anything else hidden anywhere. Tony then backed the god up several feet before letting go of the cuffs and pressing on his chest to hold him against the wall so Tony's unarmored hand could check his other hoodie pocket.

"Seriously Loki? Origami?" he snorted dismissively stuffing the folded birds and other papers into his back pocket to keep them separate.

Although you're fairly short, in all honesty you are not totally without attractive attributes," Loki purred.

Coloring, Tony started momentarily before resolutely completing his search, possibly just a bit rougher than it had been but at least without a comeback.

Oh he knew what Loki was doing. The bastard was trying to embarrass him; well good luck there, Tony Stark did not get embarrassed.

But while Tony could tell himself he didn't embarrass all he wanted, he could feel that his face had grown warm.

"Hummmm?" Loki hummed inquiringly when Tony glanced up at him, an infuriating smile widening slowly across the god's face.

But it did strike Tony that something was just a bit off.

Ignoring the amused gleam in the god's eye, Tony snagged the his hoodie pulling him off the wall far enough that he could slid behind him and push him back towards the chair he had been sitting in a few minutes earlier.

"What you did tonight? Not cool." Tony growled standing over the seated deity. "I gave you a pass the first time. Not this time." He reached in his back pocket and took out one of the origami birds. There were several things drawn on its wings that Tony couldn't identify.

"What are these?" he demanded, thrusting the intricately folded paper towards Loki.

"It's a paper bird of course," Loki said calmly, "I would have thought that was not too much for your mortal brain to figure out."

"You know Vixen, you really, really need to lay off the smart answers and just start cooperating with me. Life could get really difficult otherwise if you know what I mean."

Loki's lip curled up at the corners and he widened both brows inquiringly. "And what makes you think that I can fathom what goes on in that feeble mortal mind of yours?" He asked facetiously tossing his head to move a long strand of hair that had fallen down in his face.

It was enough to anger a saint Tony thought, not that he was one. The smug jerk just sat there as calm and cool as you pleased, as if he wasn't a hand cuffed prisoner, as if Tony couldn't crush his bones in one armored fist. But Tony still felt something was wrong, something about this whole thing was bothering Tony. He studied the god closely. Aside from the off feeling those green eyes gave him, something was not matching up?

Tony peered at the god closely having a severe 'what was wrong with this picture' moment.

Squaring his shoulders Loki noted his regard and gave him an amused look in return.

Wait... That was it. No armor. Loki wasn't wearing his armor, or even all that complicated leather tunic and duster getup he wore when he was going Asgardian casual. Loki controlled his voice, his expression, hell even his freaking breathing to perfection, but the god didn't seem to realize that a thin, wife beater style undershirt was not doing a thing to hide his mortal body's racing heartbeat.

Loki was afraid. Loki was aware of his current vulnerabilities and Loki was afraid.

Good, Tony could work with that.

"Oh Rudolf, you think dropping you was bad? You have no idea of the things I have thought of doing to you if you don't start cooperating."

Chapter End Notes

I totally can't believe Tony dropped him. I swear sometimes I am just typing away and this crap sneaks onto the screen. How does that happen?

Just trying to help

Chapter Summary

Tony just wants to help. Not everyone appreciates that!

Chapter Notes

Here is your chapter. I hope you all have a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah or a Kicking Kwanzaa!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 18 – Just trying to help

Loki was still giving him a shit eating grin when Tony took out his phone and started sending text instructions to Jarvis. Sliding his cell pack in his pocket he marveled at the control it took for Loki to project such a convincing amount of nonchalant, because Tony could see that the guy was scared shitless.

A lot of self-control, Tony thought or an awful lot of practice.

If Loki had been wearing anything else, hell just a proper shirt, Tony would have never known how upset the god really was.

And he was good, Tony knew, he had buffed plenty of times in some pretty desperate situations, situations that he shied away from even thinking of. Even so Tony was beginning to think that Loki could more than give him a run for his money when it came to successfully bluffing a busted hand.

What else had the guy been bluffing about he wondered. And escaping Tony's tower with a few scraps of paper? Who the fuck could do something like that? Hell with the set up on Loki's floor Tony would have been hard pressed to prepare an escape without Jarvis giving warning. So with nothing but a few scraps of paper he managed to get out of a high security set up, but with a whole space army behind him he couldn't take over one freaking city?

Why did this not add up?

Well granted the Avengers had been there, but still all those ships just sitting up there in space? Wouldn't it have made more sense for them to exit the portal and disperse while the Avengers and the armed services tried to protect New York? Even if the portal hadn't yet been big enough for their capital ships to transverse, why hadn't everything else been on this side protecting the portal until it was bigger? What had Loki been waiting for that he didn't deploy them?

During the whole mess, Tony had briefly wondered why so much of the Chitauri fleet had just been sitting there on the other side of the portal waiting. While he was glad, since it made it easy for him to blow them all up... In hindsight it had bothered him. But with so much crap going on lately with the company and SHIELD and actually having a personal life he hadn't really hadn't

had anytime to try and figure it all out. And of course it just irked the crap out of him that the one person who could have answered all these questions was standing right across from him and no longer had the memories to do so.

Or just no longer had access to the memories?

Where they gone, gone or was Loki's access to them just blocked?

Tony rubbed his eye's wearily. This was the kind of stuff he should have already thought through, would have already thought through... but damn, it had been a rough year.

I need to just focus on this for right now, then figure out the other stuff.

"So you going to tell me about the bird?" Tony asked tiredly lowering his head a bit and peering at Loki with one brow raised questioningly.

"I'm not inclined to do so," Loki told him seemingly calm. The sentiment of which was most likely not a lie, but again Tony could tell by the god's rapid heartbeat how upset he was and how much control that blasé delivery must have taken.

But afraid or upset or just determined, Loki was not about to give Tony any information willingly...

Until suddenly he was.

Tony had asked again... And Loki suddenly started talking. So much so that after ten minutes Tony was half tempted to duct tape his mouth shut just to hush him up.

But the god didn't say anything pertaining to Tony's questions. He just sidled off into little conversational eddies on the décor of the room. For instance, the shelf over the mantle was a very clean spare design and he liked the polished nickel supports, he thought the furniture was well crafted, very stylish if not quite his taste, although one of the vases on the bar shelf was very much to his taste and something like what he would have chosen for himself at home. But in the end it was just a bunch of polite nothings and no attempts to steer the conversation to items of interest, like how the hell he escaped with his magic blocked succeeded.

Then the conversation flipped without Tony realizing it. And he was definitely going to go over the security video to find out how the fuck that happened. At any rate, Loki mentioned that he was unfamiliar with the wood that paneled the fireplace wall and somehow suckered Tony into identifying it as a figured Cocobolo, explaining where it came from and the difficulties of working this particular hardwood. That had segued into a discussion of Cocobolo wood as the body of one of Tony's guitars and his thoughts on both the sound and looks that the hardwood provided musical instruments.

"Stop. Just stop," Tony demanded narrowing his eyes at the headache that was starting form over his left eye.

Loki raised a brow in polite inquiry.

"Very funny asshole. I'm not the one who needs to be talking."

"But Stark," the god gave a small smile, "I assure you that your discourse is both enlightening and entertaining. For a certain value of entertainment of course," he shrugged. "As it pertains to the level of boredom sitting somewhere chained up with nothing better to do that is." His lips curled into a wicked little smile.

I could try harder, maybe threaten him, Tony thought. But threaten him with what? Besides what Tony really wanted to do was sit down and think about some stuff before he went there again. Some of this shit was not making a lot of sense, which could be the alcohol and him previously being three sheets to the wind, but Tony was starting to think that there was something else going on and he needed to get to the bottom of it before he ragged on the god anymore.

Besides the rest of the evening was going to be a bit stormy, so why get the guy in a worse mood before that happened.

And hey, getting Tony to go on a verbal ramble was pretty frickin' clever, he'd give the god that.

"Sir, the task you requested has been completed," Jarvis told him.

"Ah. Thanks Jarv. Come on you, since you're not answering any of my questions, I think maybe it's time to get you back to your room. Besides, listening to you has given me a headache, and I would imagine you need to rest anyhow."

He watched as the god got up more gracefully than he would have thought possible from a low chair while having his hands cuffed behind him. Loki stood there a moment, taking a deep breath as Tony reached for his wrist, "Stark are you sure it was my discourse that gave you a headache? Could it perhaps have been caused by your heavy imbibing of spirits?"

Totally calm demeanor, racing pulse.

"You know," He told the god as they were in the elevator heading back to the guest floor, "you aren't at all like I was expecting you to be."

In other words stupid for that lame ass escape attempt, but not a raving, frothing, joker-esk laughing lunatic who throws people out of windows.

"By the way... And I really am not asking just to piss you off.... Why are your eyes green?"

OoooO

Minion, per Jarvis' instructions had the tethered cuff waiting several feet outside and slightly around the corner from the now frosted walls of Loki's cell. After he had clasped it around Loki's wrist, removed the handcuffs and has seen the exterior doors close behind the god, he told Jarvis to clear the walls. To say that Loki was upset once he cleared the second set of doors and noticed that his books and every scrap of paper was gone was bit of an understatement.

But the hell with him. Tony did what he had to do, he'd cool down in a day or two, certainly by dinner on Friday at any rate. Or at least the engineer hoped so.

Tony waved cheerily as the enraged god was pulled into the main cell and the inner doors closed behind him.

He waited until he was in the elevator before saying, "Jarvis is it me or did Flawed Design possibly try to commit suicide out there with his impromptu skydive?"

"It not really possible to tell sir, but Mister Odinson has not in the recent past been exactly noted for his mental stability."

"Tell me about it."

"Indeed sir. Of course one cannot make a decision of this magnitude however on one action that

could also have also just been a lapse in judgment due to insufficient information about his changed circumstances.”

“Yeah I guess not,” Tony agreed bouncing up and down; trying to shake off the stiff muscles in his back from carrying around the top part of his suit without the support offered by the lower section. He could wait to get the damn thing off.

“The guy gives me a headache Jarvis. I can’t figure him out, and what is up with the green eyes? When did those happen?”

“Well sir, if you recall you did wonder about that when he first woke up.”

Whoa.

“I did, didn’t I? Why the hell is wrong with me? Why the hell didn’t I look into it then?”

Tony was stunned, he seldom dropped the ball, well accidentally dropped it anyhow. Of course if he had a nickel for every time he pretended to have forgotten to do something just to get out of it... Well he’d still have made it onto the Forbes, ‘One Hundred Richest’ list. But really, truly botching a follow up on something important to him? That was pretty damn rare.

OoooO

“Stark why are you sending me this crap?” Fury asked. His voice was remarkably calm even though several of the pictures Tony had sent were clearly SHIELD surveillance tapes that Tony had hacked from their system.

“Hey, I figured you’d be interested,” Tony said.

It had taken a bit to bypass SHIELD’s firewalls and get live feed from Fury’s office, but Tony did not begrudge the effort one bit. Any amount of time was worth it to secretly watch Fury throw a silent fit. Not that you would know it to talk to him. Nope, if you knew how to hack the system... like Tony... You got to watch Fury clench his fists, grimace, glare at the phone and make all kinds of lovely faces while making sure his voice sounded only mildly irritated that Tony was interrupting his day.

“Oh we’re interested Stark. We’re interested in making sure that it does not become general knowledge that the Menace of New York was only a pawn and that some other bigger badder fuck is out there running around free, hopefully without another army. I know you think we’re stupid over here, but this is not the first time this possibility has been brought up.”

Ah, wonderful, apparently Tony’s totally fucked up Fury’s week by sending him close-ups of the god that were taken during Loki’s first appearance, the fight in New York and in the few minutes before the mischief maker’s departure. While a lot of the pictures he’d hacked from SHIELD’s surveillance system were not great quality, the ones from Tony’s penthouse living room, deck area and his personal phone photos from right before he was whisked away to fairy land clearly showed the god’s eye color undergoing dramatic color changes.

No matter what noises Fury made about the differing light affecting the way Loki’s iris color looked.

Tony was just a bit bummed that he couldn’t send him a more recent scan, which clearly showed the completed change. He’d considered a close head shot, but the god looked so much younger now than he had a year and a half ago. Also his hair was so much longer that there was no way to pass those off as pictures taken during the attack.

“I did wonder why he pulled some of the bone headed things he did during the attack,” Tony told him, not even bothering to hide the smugness in his tone. “You may recall me mentioning it a time or two.”

“Oh we recall it all right Stark, after all it was more like fifty or sixty times rather than a time or two. So it would be kind of hard to forget you saying it.”

“Excellent. Well Nicky I don’t want to keep you long, I’m sure you have little worker bees to terrorize. Tah ta,”

“Stark!”

“Yes?”

“You aren’t to tell a soul about this, not even Potts. Until we have proof positive, As far as the world is concerned we have seen to the off planet incarceration of the mad man responsible for the New York attack. You got that?”

“Yeah, right. Hey Nicky, I’d love to chat longer but Pepper is calling me. Bye.”

“Stark! Do. You. Understand?”

“Bye Nicky, give my best to Hill, tell her kisses from me and all that.”

“Sta--”

Smiling happily, Tony hung up on Fury, popped his phone in his pocket and decided that was such fun he was going to spend the rest of the day only doing fun stuff. With the muscle screaming activities of yesterday and the vestiges of a hangover from this morning, there is no way he is going to be able to concentrate on anything that isn’t fun.

So why bother trying?

OoooO

After returning to his cell the previous Wednesday the god had gone rigid and silent, which while not as entertaining as a temper tantrum did mean no additional bruises or contusions from his pet god slamming walls or anything. It also meant that Tony did not have to call Bruce to administer medical treatment... Which was good. Any day that Bruce wasn’t sighing at him in disgust he would take as a gift... And him not having anything to mention to Pepper?

Bonus!

OoooO

Due to Pepper being out of town the last few weeks, he had time to work all the bugs out of his taser cuff plan. Because mitigating circumstances of the escaping kind or not, Tony still has orders from Pepper to produce on properly restrained god of mischief at dinner when she wants to see him.

Seeing as the god had done a runner, which was obviously a security problem that needed solved asap, Tony decided to incorporate a few more features and make it something the god would wear all the time. So he added fun stuff like satellite tracking rather than just his original tower Wi-Fi location feature, and a much more powerful transmitter, a battery with longer life, and special lock. You know all the stuff you have to think of when a too smart for his own god can escape a secure

building using scraps of fucking paper.

Tony had sent the cuff down to Loki's floor and Jarvis had supervised the god putting it on and verified that the cuff was securely closed and circuits all showed that the lock was engaged and the links were secure.

"Jarvis, is the Minion link ready for this evening?" he asked while doing a bit of last minute tweaking to the auto-disaster protocols. After all he didn't want some sort of glitch taking out Minion and leaving Loki running around free.

"Yes sir, I have checked the link several times. Although I do feel that perhaps the fishbowl cartoon character is not perhaps the best interface you could have chosen for dealing with Mister Odinson." Jarvis said with more than a touch of censure.

Tony snickered to himself over that. Pepper being out of town for the last two weeks has given him additional time to pimp out the Minion bot and make quite a few cosmetic additions to the robot. Minion now looked like the bastard love child of Dummy and the Megamind cartoon character. Dummy's heavy base on the bottom, large enough to stuff tons of sensors and transmitters and battery backups coupled with a Minion-ish torso that boasted two flexible arms with hands delicate enough to do fine work, yet very strong in case of need. And since Tony never could resist a joke, he put the numerous video cameras in a fishbowl like head on top, and added a small screen inside that projected an animated the Minion fish, mimicking the movements of the limited, mostly canned speech protocols that Tony has programmed in.

And because Tony is a shit and will always be a shit, he also had a swimming, splashing, grinning screen saver-ish animation for when the robot was just sitting idle. Was it the best use of his genius man-hours to put those touches in?

No.

Does Tony maybe feel he should lighten up a bit on the god since he might not be the only reason that his tower got damaged and he was thrown out a window to fall to his death.

Maybe.

But did it amuse the hell out of Tony to pimp out the Minion bot?

Damn straight it did.

Tony grinned. "Tough Jarvis, he's just going to have to deal. If I have to adapt the bot that you two already put into laundry service duty, without asking me I might add, so it can do sentry duty when Pep wants to see him, then he has to put up with my warped sense of humor."

"If you say so sir," replied Jarvis dubiously.

"I informed Mister Odinson that he was invited to dinner this evening and that he will be escorted by a bot. He is aware that I can trigger the cuff remotely if he threatens anyone in anyway. He is also aware that even if I am disabled you can remotely trigger it and even if you do not respond, he cannot get more than twenty yards from the bot without a warning tone. He also knows that the tone will change to an incremental verbal warning as he passes thirty yards with of course forty yards being the point where he will be 'tasered 'til he drools' as you put it so elegantly it."

"So he's good with the program?" Tony asked cheerfully, inwardly smiling at his AI's apparent disapproval.

“I would not say he is in love with it, but despite his distaste for the ankle cuff and a bot minder he does seem to be pleased with the idea of the upcoming social stimuli,” Jarvis paused a moment, “although you would not know it to look at him.”

“Of course not,” Tony retorted. “Any other way and he would lose his prince of darkness title.”

Chapter End Notes

And just in time for Christmas 2014 a lovely drawing by Loveallcats13 of Loki please check it out.

<http://archiveofourown.org/works/2833421>

Chapter Five of Seven of your Christmas Pressie. Comments under the Mistletoe are always appreciated!

Dinner with the Folks

Chapter Summary

Loki has better manners than Tony... Who knew?

Incase you missed it last chapter - For Christmas 2014 a lovely drawing by Loveallcats13 of Loki please check it out.

<http://archiveofourown.org/works/2833421>

Chapter Notes

Chapter Six of Seven of your Christmas Pressie.

Hope all who celebrate got something wonderful today... I got a 19" drawing pad for my computer.... I predict my upload schedule may take a hit once my company leaves and I start playing with it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 19– Dinner with the folks

“Good evening Ms. Potts, I am so glad to see you again.” Loki said in those soft liquid tones of his, standing when Pepper and Tony entered the living room.

“Nice outfit Blitzen where did that come from?”

Tony was surprised to see the god looking incredibly sharp, decked out in a pair of black slacks, black dress shoes, dark charcoal vest, white dress shirt with a dark green tie adorned with thin black and light grey stripes. Not expensive looking clothes or anything, but it apparently they didn’t have to be expensive for the god to totally own it.

“Even though I was loathe to spend the funds Stark, the only other clothes I had were quite worn and of a casual plebian style,” the god told him with a curled lip, “that I left me with no choice but to dip into my wages and ask Jarvis to order something slightly more appropriate.” He smiled at Pepper, “After all, I could not be so discourteous as to accept an invitation to dine with a lady in unacceptable garb looking like a peasant freshly wandered in from the fields.”

He did a very noticeable up and down look at Tony before turning his attention to Pepper.

Ouch.

Smiling at Pepper, the god reached out his hand for hers as she came to a stop in front of him, “I would not insult Ms. Potts by not making every effort to make myself at least marginally presentable.” He raised he hand to his lips, almost, but not quite brushing them to the back of her hand.

Honestly the guy was acting like he was at some kind of society function making nice with the queen. Although, they might just be his everynight dinner with mom manners since she was high society and a queen.

“Oh geeze, give it a break will ya Rock of Ages?” Said Tony rolling his eyes.

Almost as one Pepper and Loki turned to glance over towards Tony, taking in his messy hair, worn jeans, slightly shabby long jersey and scuffed up tennis shoes decorated with more than a few grease spots.

“What?” Tony shrugged, jamming both hands in his pockets. “We’re not going anywhere; this is what I normally wear at home.”

“No,” corrected Pepper, glancing over at him. “You normally wear a regular band t-shirt.”

“Yeah. Well. We’ll talk about that later, ‘kay.” Tony said tugging the right sleeve of his shirt down and giving her a very pointed ‘don’t go there’ look.

“It’s a charming look indeed,” Loki told Tony politely, still lightly holding Pepper’s hand but taking half a step backwards and looking her over.

“What?” she asked almost amused, the corners of her lips twitching despite her efforts not to smile.

“Sorry, I was just looking to see where your control device was located.” With a slightly quizzical look at her watch, he raised their joined hands slightly and asked, “A more refined version perhaps?”

Pulling her hand away and letting a small wry smile escape her, Pepper held up her wrist, looking at her watch. “No of course not, why would I have one?”

“Isn’t that how Stark gets people to associate with him?” Loki asked mockingly, affecting a bemused tone and faux puzzled expression.

“No you asshole, I’m not worried that she might dash out the door and menace New York again, so she doesn’t have to wear a shock collar, or shock cuff in your case.”

Loki flashed him a wide toothy smile.

Tony groaned internally and could have kicked himself for letting that comment start the evening, especially since he knew the god had several times asked Jarvis where the tower was located.

“Do continue Stark.”

“After you do have a habit of darting out open doors like an untrained puppy.” He babbled hoping to distract Loki from his little slip. Which didn’t work, he could tell by the tiny curling of the corners of the god’s lips and the amused flash in his eyes.

Of course Loki had noticed Tony’s little slip and the fact that Tony was aggravated about it. This was Loki, no matter how memory deprived he was, the guy wasn’t stupid, far from it in fact.

Damn, I knew this dinner thing was a bad idea.

“Oh I am sorry Stark, I didn’t mean to suggest that associating with you socially was so repellant that people had to be forced into your presence under the threat of pain.”

“Really Rudolf? Lies already?” Tony asked, a little peeved that despite his recent apology for

maybe being a bit rougher than necessary during their recent adventure, he was apparently still going to get lip all evening.

A totally his own idea apology unasked for or demanded by Pepper even. An almost unheard of his own idea even apology.

There is no justice in this world, he decided slipping an arm around Pepper's waist, and feeling her lean into him comfortingly.

"Not at all Stark, I had no intention of suggesting it at all, since I know it to be true. There was no lie in that statement." Loki gave him a small smirk before turning it in to a much kinder smile directed towards Pepper. "It would also not be a lie to say that I have been very much looking forward to seeing Ms. Potts again."

Pepper looked at him curiously and asked, "Why?" before gesturing everyone towards the dining table that one of her assistants had arranged shortly before Minion escorted Loki up to the penthouse.

"Well other than you are of course a feast for the eyes," Loki's smile widened at her slight start, "I was sure it would take a visit from you before anyone noticed that their prisoner was starving," Loki told her calmly, quickly stepping around the end of the table and pulling out her chair for her, just as Tony pulled started to pull his own out.

Ignoring the glower Tony directed his way; Loki helped a slightly flustered Pepper slide her chair in, before moving back towards the vacant chairs on the opposite side of the table and seating himself.

"He looked up at the still standing Tony, not allowing anything more than polite interest to show in his expression, "Are you not joining us Stark?"

Tony wondered irritably how it was that a Space Viking Alien Prisoner was out classing him in his own house. Hell, he'd seen Thor's taste in earth clothes and he certainly had marveled at Thor's table manners or lack thereof. So either Mister Smoothie was a Space Viking exception or Thor was not the best representative of Asgardian culture.

But there was still no doubt in Tony's mind that Loki was a world class prick.

After Tony had settled, Pepper took the lids off of the various dishes, and wordlessly invited them both to serve themselves. "Please, there is plenty," she told Loki after he had taken a modest portion of salad. "What type of dressing do you like?" She asked, gesturing to a quartet of small dressing pitchers on the side of the table.

"Ah... I'm not sure what it's called," Loki told her with a slight frown, ignoring Tony's huff. "It is white, creamy; I am not fond of the oil based one."

"Jarvis, Blue Cheese, Ranch or Caesar?" Tony asked impatiently, peeking at the contents of the dressings available.

"Of the white dressings, Mister Odinson appears to prefer the Ranch sir. I will make a note not to order the Italian dressing in the future."

"Here ya go Gandalf," Tony said handing the ranch dressing over to the god. He caught Loki's eye, "You know, if there's something you don't like to eat, you can just tell Jarvis so he doesn't order it for you anymore."

Loki looked at him steadily for a moment before taking the pitcher. "It is not for me to make demands of my captors Stark."

Bullshit, Tony thought.

"Ya know, somehow I get the idea that you normally are not reluctant to make your preferences known. Unless you are trying to get me into trouble that is." Tony said shrewdly. The look of amusement that flickered in Loki's eyes told Tony he was right.

"You are trying to get me into trouble aren't you?"

"Well Stark, I was certainly surprised that my allotment of food increased. I was sure it would take a visit from Ms. Potts for that to happen."

He stared intently at Tony for a moment before cocking his head slightly, "You weren't the one who noticed were you Stark?" Loki glanced over at Pepper then his eyes flicked back to Tony.

"It wasn't you? Was it?" he asked Tony, although he seemed to already know the answer.

"What are you talking about," Tony scoffed, abandoning his hardly touched rabbit food for some only marginally more acceptable linguine with marinara sauce, seriously Marinara? If he was eating pasta it should have a full rich meat sauce at least, not this thin nasty stuff. But hey, at least the veal had thick layer of cheese on it.

"Of course it was me." He said looking up at the god.

"Please Stark, don't even try to lie to me, you are as transparent as a child with cookie crumbs down their tunic." Loki turned to Pepper, "Was it you or Jarvis?" he asked.

"Jarvis," she said smiling. "He's very good."

"I will take your word for that, which is more than I will do for your other answer. Thank you for noticing." Loki said handing her his empty plate when she motioned for it. "It was becoming quite uncomfortable."

"You know Loki, you can just tell when something is wrong," Pepper said calmly loading the plate high with pasta and several servings of veal and then handing it back to him. "Tony pass Loki the rolls and butter."

Tony plonked the basket down in front of the god and pushed a tray of butter pats his way towards the ex-god of mischief.

"Ms. Potts, it is not my responsibility to administer the contract that Stark has signed with my mother. If he is not smart enough to find them, I refuse point out his violations to him."

"Pep, I'm telling you, he wants to get me in trouble. But you're shit out of luck bud, 'cause I'm all on top of it now." Tony said with a smirk. Not that Tony wasn't pissed at the 'Gotcha' game that Loki played to the extent of allowing himself to go hungry for months at a time attempt to win. But, you almost had to admire a guy who was that willing to suffer like that to take someone else down.

Almost.

Or at least Tony would if it wasn't him that was losing the damn game. "But I'm on to you now, so there won't be any more violations," He concluded.

“Well I did try,” the god chuckled and Tony had the distinct feeling that he joke was still on him.

“Jarvis! What the hell are we currently doing that violates the contract?” Tony demanded, exchanging a glance with Pepper, who pulled at her lower lip in concentration while he mentally ran through the contract provisions, groaning as the realization hit him at the same time Jarvis spoke.

“Mister Odinson is supposed to be provided with reading and writing material sir,” Jarvis said apologetically. “You did confiscate all of the paper and writing implements in his room after that incident two days ago. So technically you are currently in violation of the terms.”

Fuck.

“So... Stark... When am I getting my books and journals back?” Loki asked watching him with a sharp gleam in his green eyes.

“Tony what did you do?” Pepper asked sharply.

“Oh no. Don’t look at me like that. I had to Pep, he was writing magic do-hickies on scraps of paper and used them to get outside.”

“What?” Pepper’s voice was just shy of shrill as she glared from Tony to Loki and back again.

“Like out of the building escaped? Outside? Tony I thought you just meant he got off his floor.”

Setting down the fork he had been holding Loki looked at her, “Stark attacked me.”

“I surprised you,” Tony snapped, stung by the injustice of the claim and the way Pepper narrowed her eyes at him.

Shaking her head Pepper closed her eyes and pinched the bridge of her nose. “It doesn’t matter now. We are moving on.”

Opening her eyes and looking briefly towards heaven for strength she continued sharply, “So you took the stuff he used to write with then. Fine, I got that. But why did you take the books and his personal notes?”

“Hello!” Tony huffed. “Pepper, he escaped. Outside even. That so totally shouldn’t have been possible, “Tony was annoyed that she didn’t see the connection.

“Honestly Pep, Books are made of Paper,” which didn’t seem to be an answer Pepper was prepared to accept. “Come on. Paper, which he could have torn out scraps from the margins and wrote his magic crap with a fork tine and beef gravy or ketchup or I don’t know... Anything!”

And I am just not that stupid to let you try it again you asshole, Tony growled internally as the trickster smirked at him.

Even days later Tony was feelingslightly panicked at how close the god had come to slipping through all of his security with a few scraps of paper and a pen. He could have gone anywhere; or on a different day he could have made it up to the penthouse and attacked him or Pepper. He might not have his godly strength, but the bastard obviously knew how to fight. Lord knew he could probably kick Tony’s un-suited ass from here to Sunday.

Loki’s attack hadn’t injured him through the suit’s armor of course, but he had still felt the damn mule kick. Tony would have hated to think how injured he would have been if he hadn’t been

wearing the suit.

And besides, Tony told himself sulkily, whack god may or may not have been totally responsible for New York, but fuck knows whatever he had done on Asgard had to be pretty bad or they wouldn't have shook his etch-a-sketch and stuck him in solitary on another realm.

"Tony..." Pepper drawled his name warningly. "There are provisions that have to be adhered to."

Yes there were he thought mulishly. And Tony certainly wasn't taking the flak for letting the god slip his punishment. He was pretty sure the Space Viking King would want more than a monetary penalty for losing track of the trickster.

"Hey, I'm allowed to reduce his privileges if he doesn't behave," he told her, calling her stubborn and raising it a pissed.

Tony looked pained for a moment, knowing Pepper was going to rip him a new one if he didn't come up with something quick that she would accept.

Oh. That could work.

Glaring at tall, dark and bat shit Tony said, "Consider your books and notes confiscated as a penalty for your escape attempt."

"Which you caused by attacking me," Loki retorted sharply.

"Nope, sorry. You panicked when I appeared unexpectedly."

They both glared at each other for a few moments. But after a warning growl from Pepper they both looked away. Tony up to the ceiling as if seeking some of that divine wisdom Pepper had been looking for eariler, Loki down at his plate to wrestle with the lightly sauced fettuccine noodles like he has seen Pepper and Tony do.

"Aren't you afraid that with nothing to occupy my time, I might decide to come up with another escape plan in desperation?" Loki asked almost disinterestedly, lifting the fork to his mouth.

Tony smirked, "Nope," he said, watching Loki chew for a moment.

Swallowing Loki regarded him steadily before speaking.

"Then obviously you don't know anything about me Stark," Loki said calmly, taking a roll and buttering it.

A strained silence covered the table, after a few minutes the god quit tearing bites of butter bread from the roll and put it down on the edge of plate.

"Ah," Loki looked down at the table thoughtful for a moment sliding a side long glance at Pepper before he raised his chin and regarded Tony, "So. Stark... Exactly how long do you intend to keep me in solitary confinement without anything to occupy my time?"

"I'll let you know you know in a few days what I decide." Tony shrugged, "In the mean time I'll see about maybe throwing a luncheon or two to give you some extra laundry to keep you busy."

"You are of course the epitome of kindness Stark," Loki said turning in his chair a bit so that he could look at Pepper without really seeing Tony.

"And how is your assistant doing these days Ms. Potts, the one who lent me the books?"

Tony listened for a few minutes as the god of snark made nice with Pepper, talking about her assistants in general and the one that had lent him to beginning reader books in particular. Sending his many thanks to her, blah, blah blah.

Then they started discussing a book that he had read that had been one that Pepper had donated to his pile. Some sort of bestselling fiction that Tony would have never guessed an insane killer would have found interesting. When Loki asked her if she had read a book that he had acquired from the lost and found pile that Jarvis had borrowed for him Tony kind of tuned them out. While Pepper didn't have a lot of time to read, she did go in spurts while traveling when she was tired of going over documents or when really stressed she liked to take long soaking baths and read.

Tony was pondering how he was going to fulfill the contract without giving jerk god any paper or writing implements or more importantly shifting any cost to his account since he flat didn't want to go through another boring budget meeting with the guy. It was fricking bad enough when he had to do it for his own company and there were millions of dollars on the line. He just flat wasn't going to go there with Loki over a couple of thousand.

He was roughing out some final plans that should work without incurring the wrath of the god of accountants when he noticed that they weren't talking anymore. He looked up to see two pairs of eyes looking at him expectantly.

"What?"

"I had asked if there was any type of book you enjoyed Stark? Everything Jarvis borrowed from your library seemed to be scientific; all the leisure reading had belonged to your mother according to the book plates inside of them."

"Why?"

"Why?" Loki's brows furled a bit.

"Yeah," Tony said. "Why are you interested? What do you care?"

"Ah," Loki gave him a little half smile. "Politeness Stark. While I am of course immensely enjoying talking about books to Ms. Potts, I do realize not everyone cares to converse on this subject. After all you are my host, so it would be rude and insulting to converse on something that excludes you completely. Therefore, if this is not a topic you care to converse on, I will have to find another topic that you can take part in."

"Seriously Rudolf?"

"Yes of course," He gave a small chuckle at the incredulous look that Tony was tossing his way. "I am a prince you know, Unlike some," he raised a brow and ran his eyes mockingly over Tony, "I was taught proper manners."

"Yeah. Right." Tony retorted skeptically. "Princely social manners, like Thor? Cause let me tell you, I've seen the guy eat. His table manners could use some work and don't get me started on how he will drone on for hours about this quest or that quest."

Loki smiled at him.

The guy had a beautiful smile. Oh he had smiled before, but when you took out the snark and the bitterness, he really had a great smile.

"Let us just say Stark, that while Thor is a prince and has been schooled in the social graces since

he was running around in soft shoes, some of his lessons did not exactly stick and in fact are ongoing.”

“He might not live long enough,” Tony laughed, thinking about Thor and his boisterous behavior when more than three people were sitting at the table with him.

“Oh?” Loki hummed, clearly inviting expansion on Tony’s last statement.

“Not gonna happen Blitzen.” Tony snapped, his tone not in the least softening his last statement and earning himself an ankle kick from Pepper.

“Indeed. Well Stark, I just want you to know, I will find out what happened.” Loki told him with an ugly look in his eyes that was totally at odds with the warm smile on his face.

“Oh really,” Tony retorted flippantly, “and how do you think that is going to happen?”

“I haven’t quite figured that out yet, but I am quite resourceful, so it will happen.” Loki said in a polite distant voice, his expression smoothed to a blank mask. “I just feel it fair to warn you in case for some reason you would have reason to fear me learning these things.” There was no threat in his voice per say, but Tony did feel a little shiver run up his spine, but he shrugged it off.

“Well hell, you know Loki that pretty sporting of you to warn me.” Tony cocked a cynical brow at him. “To be honest I didn’t expect you to Rudolf, but hey, I appreciate the warning.”

Loki dipped his head in an ‘of course your welcome’, kind of motion and glanced over towards a bemused Pepper before again regarding Tony. “Think nothing of it. The barest of courtesies I assure you. However,” He nodded at Pepper, “I will promise you though not to harm Ms. Potts no matter what I have to do to achieve my freedom.”

Tony choked and grabbed frantically at his drink, coughing as a bite of veal parmesan attempted to kill him. If he didn’t know any better he would say the bastard had timed it so he would be chewing when he said that.

“Loki,” Pepper chided warningly.

“What??” Tony gasped waving off a worried back pat from Pepper, eyes watering just a bit he glared at Loki.

“Ms. Potts, she has been very generous in her assistance to me, even though she doesn’t like me, so I will see that no harm comes to her from my hands. I do owe her that.”

“Real sporting...” Tony coughed, “of you there Lokes.”

“Loki, I don’t dislike you,” Pepper said, lying through her teeth as far as Tony could figure.

And hey he wasn’t wrong since their resident expert seemed to agree with him.

“Please Ms. Potts, I may not know why I am here, but I assure you I can still tell when someone is lying to me.” The god told her, setting his silverware across his plate and leaning back to regard her.

“Yeah right,” Tony huffed with an exaggerated eye roll.

“Would you like me to prove it to you Stark?” Loki’s eyes widened inquiringly.

Pepper stood, “Let’s go into the living room. Do either of you want coffee?” she asked motioning

them out of the dining area.

“Yeah, yeah I would.” Tony said. “To both questions actually. Coffee please Pepper and a chance to confound you,” he told Loki.

They reentered the living room, complete with minion bot standing in the corner making the occasional soft splash noise as its screen saver ran.

“Easily done Stark,” Loki said resettling himself in a different armchair from two nights ago. “Tell me ten things, three of them lies and I will tell you which three are lies.”

Tony’s face scrunched up. “Yeah, and we’ll know this how? I mean seriously, how will you know I tell you three lies? What if everything I tell you, no matter how farfetched is the truth?” He sat on the end of one of the tan leather sofas reaching up to get his coffee mug from Pepper.

“Are you saying you would cheat?”

Would he cheat? Tony Stark cheat? Well, if it meant not losing to the tall asshole sitting in front of him... maybe? Tony doesn’t normally cheat, but he doesn’t like to lose either.

So... Maybe?

“Wait I have a better idea,” Pepper said as she folded her legs beneath her on the couch beside Tony. “Direct competition might not be a good idea for you two right now...” Tony rolled an eye over her way not bothering to hide the smirk playing on his lips.

“After all, you two have a history together, so perhaps something of a more neutral nature would work better.”

Loki’s eyes opened slightly, “Really?” he purred, lights of unholy glee dancing in his eyes as he deliberately studied Tony, before drawling, “Well all things are possible I suppose. And I have been known in the past to be rather adventurous...”

Chapter End Notes

I'm so excited.... we are almost to the chapter that started this story!

You cannot tell a lie

Chapter Summary

Pepper gets some help and Loki is credited with the assist.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 120,000 words so far

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 20 – You cannot tell a lie

Tony's smirk morphed into a look of mild horror as Loki contemplated the suggestion that they had a past history, with the totally unjustified emphasis on sexual history he supposed.

"Well all things are possible I suppose," Loki told Pepper. "And I have been known in the past to be rather adventurous... And this would surely classify as the far side of that," he said, assuming a vaguely horrified look waving a hand towards Tony. "I must assume this was before you and he became a couple?"

"What? Oh no you didn't." Tony stuttered.

"Well it obviously was not during," the god said firmly. "I don't share. Not at all, so since you aren't dead, it would have had to be beforehand."

Tony could feel the warmth rising up the back of his neck. He knew it was only going to be a few seconds before he was as red as a one of his suits. "Bastard," he muttered in a low but still meant to be heard voice.

"Oh no Stark, that I can assure you I am not."

"Loki that is not what I meant and you know it," Pepper gasped trying, almost successfully to smother a laugh.

"No? Well then what did you mean?" he riposted quickly giving her a 'Yes please do explain' look.

"I meant..."

Even as Tony opened his mouth to shout at her, she stopped, mouth open, brows knitting in confusion, a puzzled, slightly pained look on her face as she stared at Loki. Tony watched as she cleared her throat, "What I mean is..."

Loki's chin lifted and he studied her, a hard look on his face flashing across his face for the briefest of moments. "A geas perhaps?"

Pepper's mouth worked without sound before she merely widened her eyes in agreement. "Well never mind that now," Pepper interjected hurriedly finding words that could be released, while Tony just shot him a sharp look. He did notice the god angrily tucking this tid-bit of info away to mull over later.

Tony hated fucking magic, give him science with rules he could understand, this mumbo-jumbo stuff just got on his last nerve.

Pepper waved her hand, "Anyhow, We did some quick final interviews last week for our next batch of summer interns, and as per usual we found two of them that made it to the finalist stage lied during the interview." She laughed ruefully, "Like Stark International wasn't going to double check everything they told us. Anyhow Jarvis has the videos of the interviews; you watch them and tell me which two. Fair enough?"

"What the hell Pep," Tony grumbled.

"Hush, Tony, I was going to watch them later anyhow, I need to decide which one will be working with me."

So Tony drank his coffee as his fiancé and his pain in the ass 'guest' watched young hopefuls interview for a coveted internship with Stark International, with the cherry on top going to the one Pepper picked for her own. And damned if the stupid fucker didn't peg the two that it took a second back ground check to catch in a lie. But he also told Pepper to check one of the guys out more.

"He didn't lie," Loki told her, "As he said, he very much wants to work here for the advantage it will give him when he graduates, but that is not all the full reason. I can't say for sure, but if I had been asking him questions I would have made sure to ask him more, there is a conflict of some sort."

"Conflict of interest?" Pepper asked.

"Yes, that is a good way to put it. It may be nothing, but based on his answers I definitely would have asked more questions in this area."

"Jarvis?"

"Shall I send an email from you to security and ask them to look into this, or would you like me to check on it for you?" Jarvis asked.

"You please, if you can't find anything in a quick check, then send it to them. Although I doubt they will find anything if you can't," Pepper said smiling at one of Jarvis cameras.

Loki and Pepper discussed the other candidates and he recommended that she personally take another look at the weakest of the ten interviewees, assuring Pepper that while she was uncertain of her strengths, she had been the most open of all of them combined. He then ranked the rest of them in order of perceived trustworthiness.

“Ms. Potts?”

“Yes Jarvis?”

“I am not finished with my check yet, but my preliminary search found that the young man in question has a long standing friendship with the daughter of a Hammer Industries Executive.”

“Really? How do you do that?” Pepper demanded laughingly at Loki. “It’s amazing...”

“It’s a learned skill, I could teach you if you like. I do owe you for your kindnesses, getting me medicine when I was so ill, getting me enough food to eat. It takes time of course to make it automatic, but there are many indicators if you know what to look for.”

“I doubt if I have time, but I may just have Jarvis pipe you the vids next time someone is being interviewed we’re not sure about.”

“Oh right,” scoffed Tony, “let’s have the guy in lock up n cell block ‘C’ checking out our new hires.”

Seriously Pep? Seriously?

Tony may have to revise his opinion of the god’s first visit to New York, but he had spent enough time with him to know that he was, in Tony’s professional opinion, still a world class jerk.

OoooO

“You know, not that I don’t appreciate you being so helpful to my CEO, but you could try that approach with me once in a while, you might like it,” Tony said pocketing the phone he had been using to play a few rounds of ‘Questioneering’ while they had been watching the interviews. And of course he had totally aced them of course since he was an engineer’s engineer.

“Stark I fail to see where my advantage lies in being ‘nice’ to you.” Loki smirked, settling back in his chair, legs wide and hands comfortable laced across his midsection. The god looked like his aborted escape attempt had never happened. He was every bit at ease as if Tony was a guest in his house, rather than the other way around.

Fucker.

“Well smart ass,” Tony retorted, not really trying to taunt him ‘cause he was trying to be understanding and all that crap, but perhaps doing it just a little ‘cause the bastard still totally deserved it. “Maybe you would have gotten better meals sooner if you had tried it. I’m just saying.”

“Ah, so you were withholding adequate food as a strategy? My apologies Stark, here I was thinking you were just a clueless unobservant oaf. How short sighted of *me* not to realize it was actually part of your brilliant scheme to starve me into cooperation.” Tony could hear smug condescension radiating off of every word the god spoke.

“Quite the clever plan indeed,” Loki purred. “I am truly sorry I doubted your planning abilities.”

“Tony!” Pepper snapped irritable, looking up from the notes she was tapping on her phone.

“Calmly Ms. Potts, calmly. After all it was quite a good plan was it not?” Loki asked with mocking encouragement lacing his voice, a small smile tugging the corners of his lips.

“What?” Tony put his coffee down rolling a wary eye towards Pepper, “No. It wasn’t that way at all!”

“Oh. So you were simply clueless? Well not exactly a surprise, but still not very bright of you to admit it...” he trailed off with a wicked grin watching Pepper smack the engineer on his arm.

“Oh like you would have done better?” Tony snorted.

“Oh course I would have you dull creature.” Loki snapped, his urbane affability disappearing for the briefest of moments before he gathered it back with a flicker of irritation at his slip.

“If nothing else, even without my magic I am still a strategist and I know more than a little about diplomacy.”

Not that the god was being condescending mind you.

Well yeah. Yeah he was, thought Tony irritably, and it is pissing me straight off.

“Oh yeah, diplomacy, there’s a useful topic to know,” he retorted with a dismissive snort.

Tony ignored Pepper’s annoyed huff.

“Stark, diplomacy is the art of getting what you want. That seems to be your main complaint right now isn’t? That you have not been getting what you want or indeed what you need from me. Is this not the case?”

“Yes, he complains about it constantly, frankly I’m tired of hearing about it.” Pepper chimed in when Tony wouldn’t answer, smoothing down her black pencil skirt with abrupt little pats before laying her phone on her lap.

Stung by Pepper’s comment Tony sneered at the god, “Well smart ass how would you have gotten a smug stuck up git that only says a few words a month to you because he’s a whining brat who can’t accept the fact that I can’t tell him what he wants to know... How would you get that bastard to talk to you?

“Ah, an interesting problem, first I would make sure not to impugn the moral character of his mother by insinuating that she was less than faithful before he was conceived.” Loki barred his teeth and widened his eyes just a bit while staring at Tony for a few moments, before assuming a thoughtful look.

“Hummm...,” laying his ankle across his knee he regarded Tony. “Second, I would get my opponent into a position, where talking to me about anything was even an option. After all I can’t expect a fish to swim if I don’t give him access to water can I?”

“Fish now, how is this useful, the guy is talking about aquariums,” he appealed to Pepper who waved him off irritably.

“Can it Tony and listen, you might learn something that isn’t engineering.”

Was Pepper siding with Loki? How is this even possible he wondered? Did she forget the bastard threw me out a window? Okay so maybe he was wearing Teseract contacts, but those didn’t mean he had to aim for a window...

“Now, now Ms. Potts. In Stark’s defense it isn’t always necessary to use strategy to get conditions set for a diplomatic solution.”

“See Pepper.” Tony said making a face at her.

“So far his main skill set seems to be that ever popular, ‘this didn’t work the first time let’s try it again’ method, a very common approach for the less intelligent set. I however am not personally a fan of using that approach since it either hardens your opponent’s opposition or takes so long that the prize is worthless by the time you obtain it.”

“Oh really?” Tony huffed and glared at the god, while Loki just smiled.

“Yes, really.” Loki lifted one hand apparently suddenly concerned about the state of his finger nails. “And how is Doctor Foster doing these days Stark? Still laboring away at her problem? Ah well, from her writing she seems like a very intelligent mortal I’m sure she’ll get there in the end.”

Okay, now the bastard was just getting on his nerves.

“I’ll have you know I’m a genius.”

“Really?” Loki affected a puzzled mien.

“Strange. I would think that a genius would have figured this out all ready. But apparently your definition of a genius is greatly different from mine.”

“Yeah, well,” Tony snarked with a nasty twitch of his lips. However, my genius still works. Sucks about your bibbity boppity boo not working anymore.”

Tony saw a flash of insanity before those green eyes narrowed. Well yes, that seemed to get through, But he thought he saw something else too, before Loki returned to inspecting his fingernails, those green eyes now had a suspicious shine that hadn’t been there a moment ago.

“Ah, so you can duplicate my non-magical feat of the other day then? I’m impressed Stark, I didn’t realize you were that talented.” Loki drawled staring hard at him.

“Fuck you,” Tony said a little heatedly, without acknowledging that it had been a well-placed back stroke. And how in the hell did the god figure that his scribble papers weren’t a form of magic?

“Oh yes, cursing... another refuge of the feeble minded.” Loki smirked as they continued to volley visual and verbal daggers at each other.

“Hey I’m not the one who’s spent the last year--”

“Tony! Loki!”

“Stop it both of you,” Pepper admonished them sharply.

“Pep--” Tony stopped when her eyes flashed warningly. She turned to the god lounging in the chair beside her.

“Loki, would you be so kind as to explain what you would have done in this situation?”

“Well now,” the god of mischief’s face lit up with a malicious smirk, “that would be telling would it not?”

“You know you want to,” Pepper countered.

“Well yes, there is that.”

Loki sat up very straight regarding Pepper closely with a wide smile, “But I’m not really sure Stark deserves any of my insights.”

Pepper opened her mouth, but before she could retort, he did a modified eye roll and sighed in an overly dramatic fashion.

“However Stark is my host, however unwillingly this evening. So perhaps a recap of his missed opportunities would be a proper guest offering, since I don’t have access to get anything else.”

Loki’s eyes narrowed a moment in thought, before his face slid into a bland mask which he turned to Tony. “Stark, the most basic lesson of diplomatic leverage is that small favors given early are worth far more than big favors given later.”

“And how exactly does that have anything to do with me?” Tony asked irritated that space punk thought he didn’t know that, hell he was a businessman after all. And as loathe as he was to admit his mistakes to others, he knew that was rule number one... but it switched places a lot with rule two since they were equally important. Rule two being don’t piss off your suppliers, especially if they had a monopoly... on their product...

Fuck.

Loki had a monopoly on Rainbow Bridge information. How in the hell do I keep forgetting that? Probably because I can’t stand the tall bastard, but still.

Well of course there was Jane Foster... but still, it’s not like she seemed to be making any real new progress or anything. Of course, normally when Tony’s suppliers gave him grief he just bought their stock out from under them... not something he could do here.

Double Fuck.

“Had you made small overtures when I was in need of them with what information you could give me about why I was here, perhaps finding a way to let me know about the Geas to explain what you could not tell me and why, we might have come to an understanding. Baring that just general information about where I was or an activity however small to give me something else to think about would have helped. Either of those things, one of which was required by contract but withheld, but anything at all before you started badgering me for information would have gotten you more answers for less. Now however we have a different history. One that involves you harassing me for information that you obviously can’t figure out on your own given the time you have been looking for it.”

Then the bastard just unfolded gracefully from the low chair he had been sitting in and stood up. Tony tensed and scrambled to his feet also, but the godling just stood there quietly and clasped his hand behind his back.

“Sadly for you Stark, I am afraid that now, it will take quite a bit for you to even get the smallest scraps of information.” He turned and looked at Pepper, “I thank you for your invitation this evening, but I think I would like to get in an exercise period before I retire for the night, if that is permissible?”

“Fuck the rainbow bridge; just identify some metal for me okay? I would be as ecstatic with joy if you just did that?”

And of course Loki ignored him and just stood there waiting.

“No thank you for being such a good dinner guest.” Pepper said smiling at him as she stood up

next to Tony. “And thank you for the insights into my interviewees, maybe I send you a few more to look at someday. Anyhow, in thanks I’m going to have Jarvis pipe you down a movie every day.”

What the hell? Tony thought wrathfully. “Hey! Leverage Pepper, Leverage!”

“Hey!” Pepper said mockingly looking over at him, “Tony you two need something you two can talk about during next week’s dinner, since you don’t do books and your fish” She grinned at Loki, “needs water to swim in... conversationally that is.”

“Hell... do you even know what movies are Gandalf?” Tony asked grumpily.

“Of course I know what they are Stark.”

What do you know? Gods not only do eye rolls, they have some pretty elaborate ones at that, thought Tony distracted. Who knew?

“They are pre-recorded entertainment of a longer length than a television show, usually telling a fictional story, almost always worse than the book it was based on,” the god said in a tone that indicated that of course nothing was better than a book.

“These movies would be free?” the god asked his eyes flicking towards Tony with a sly smile.

“God almighty Pepper,” Tony groaned, “He’s like that freakin’ Darisen down in accounting. Nothing, I mean nothing is allowed on his expense sheet without him questioning it.”

“Yes,” Pepper laughed. “One movie a day will be free.”

“But I get to pick ‘em!” Tony declared in a gleeful tone.

Loki’s mouth turned down in distaste.

“No Tony, but you can pick the one Thursday evening as long as it has an audience score of at least seventy percent on the Rotten Tomatoes site.”

“Hey. I can work with that.” Tony replied, starting to mentally list his favorite horrible movies with high scores. Then Pepper went ahead and burst his bubble.

“And you and I can watch it too up here, that way we’ll all be familiar with at least one of the movies Loki is watching.” Pepper widened her eyes and smiled at Tony, knowing she had just busted him.

She was such a bitch sometimes. Which is possibly why I love her, he mused.

“Okay, whatever,” Tony grumped while Loki and Minion headed towards the elevator. But hey, at least he’ll get to see what the god likes and with any luck maybe he’ll like a movie based on a TV show...

Tony wondered how much information he’d get from Loki in exchange for a television and full cable package.

Pepper was calling out her good nights as the elevator opened when it hit him; Pepper got information from the god this evening. Maybe not the information Tony was looking for, but it was a start. And... since they were now adding water to Loki’s goldfish bowl, perhaps he *could* think of a few things, like a treasure chest with bubbles or a few arches of seaweed or something to temp

the god with and trot them out at dinner time in the upcoming weeks while Pepper was there to help him make the deal.

“Oh my god Pepper, you are too good.” Tony gasped. As the elevator began to descend he snagged her around the waist and dropped them both on to the couch. The only thing hotter than a strawberry blonde in his opinion was said blonde being smarter than hell.

“I so totally know how I am going to work the book, notebook thing with him now.” Tony turned her so she laid spread out on top of him. He kissed her. “Total genius,” Tony started raining little kisses all over her face, “And you’re pretty smart yourself.” Ignoring Pepper’s dismissive huff he nuzzled her. “And so sneaky like, I just love that about you.”

“Oh you do? Do you?”

“Oh yes,” Tony moved her shirt collar out of the way with his nose so he could place a small bites on her collar bone.

“But,” He pulled back to give her a sharp look. “There is one thing sexier than a long legged sneaky woman.”

Pepper laughed, touching her forehead to him and looking into his eyes.

“And what exactly would that be?”

Tony reached up and licked her lips. “For those long legs to be wrapped around me,” He breathed.

Pepper settled herself over him, allowing her skirt to ride up to her hips and wiggling until her long legs were flanking him, “Like this?” She teased.

“It’s a start.” Tony told her pulling her hips down tight.

OoooO

What to do with a paper-less Loki? Oh Tony had known he was going to have to give the god back his books and his journals. He had certain latitude to arrange things by contract, but permanently withholding those items was specifically not allowed. Apparently Loki momma was worried what trouble her little boy would get into if he didn’t have any distractions. And since Frigga did know him better than Tony did, he decided to yield to her expertise.

But nowhere in the contract did it say Tony had to give him the physical books back. Since they were only borrowed books anyway, he had Jarvis return them to his library, the lost and found or wherever else they had originally come from. Tony then spent a few afternoons installing projectors and sensors while Loki was working, locked up in the laundry room. When Tony was done Jarvis was could pop up several display screens for Loki to use, within strict limitations of course.

So Loki got his books back in ePub format to use on virtual displays that Jarvis controlled. And best of all, the entire set up was done in the time it took Loki to do a few days’ worth of lab coats and get Tony’s towels all nice and fluffy. And to keep Mister Cheapskate appeased, Tony decided to run up a few modifications he had been thinking of to bring the cost of the projector setup down enough to think about releasing it for sale. Loki got his set up free and Tony had a beta tester whose usage was subject to instant and constant review.

Since Jarvis had noted that he god frequently covered his whole work table with books opened to different pages, Tony decided to go with multiple screens. Hell otherwise he would have just

epoxied an e-reader shut and tossed to the god. He did have to epoxy a drawing pad shut so Loki could write his notes in those stupid pictogram rune things he uses, since there was no way that Loki is getting anything but scans of his notebooks back.

Notebooks that Tony still couldn't decode, it was like the bastard was switching languages on him every other line or something. But he did scan the damn things into a file and glue shut a wireless keyboard. Tony was crossing his fingers that the speed and ease of using a standard keyboard might entice the god to use English or something that is not space alien script for his notes.

So the bastard got his books and notes back and Tony was back in compliance, take that space alien contracts.

So everything was kicking right along and then Pepper bless her heart, decided to introduce the mischief maker to the internet one evening at dinner. One time was all it took for Loki to be ready to deal for internet access. And this time Tony was a bit more careful in what he asked for.

“So this is the deal Reindeer Games, in exchange for internet access you agree to identify and tell me all the properties you know about or have heard about with three different materials. This includes any information that you have on how to work the material, possible dangers of the material, components of the material, safe handling of the material and its components, uses of the material, origin of and properties of the material.”

Tony of course would have liked to get information about the Rainbow/Einstein-Rosen Bridge of course, but the god wasn't budging on that one. They had argued back and forth over that for two weeks until finally Pepper dragged Tony aside and told him to pick something else since the important thing right now was to get Loki to make any kind of a deal at all.

Of course since Loki was not dealing for the Einstein-Rosen Bridge he was getting only incoming internet and anything blocked that pertained to him or the topics restricted by the contract... Although in all honestly Tony would not have given the god outgoing internet access for anything... He shuddered to think what would happen if the god of mischief got a Facebook, twitter or tumblr account, who knew what catastrophes he could cause. No for right now whack god would just have to settle for incoming Google searches and the like. And if the god spent a bunch of his salary on buying eBooks from Amazon, rather than keeping his mother's account topped off so Tony couldn't order more material... Well Tony certainly wouldn't have a problem with that. All his godly worries were solved.

“Sir, Director Fury and seven S.H.I.E.L.D. agents are in the lobby. Several of the agents are quite heavily armed. Director Fury seems very upset wants to speak to you immediately.”

Chapter End Notes

If you are still reading this... and you haven't commented, bookmarked or followed, please think about doing so. Anyone of the three help the story placement on the search engine. (of course please feel free to leave all three if you like, that would help even more!)

May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Ways to Cope

Chapter Summary

Tony finds ways to cope that don't all involve liquor. That counts as growth right?

Explanation - This is me trying not to be so lineal. The last section of chapter 20 indicated a time span occurring. Chapter 21 details stuff that happened during that time. This chapter denotes the things happened BEFORE Fury arrived.

The first section of this chapter (21) indicates the things that had happened during the time that Loki has spent using his internet access and writing.

The second section, Tony's narrative, also notes the passage of time long enough to for lots of things to have happened in IM3.

I have received an pm saying that there is some confusion. Do you think so? If so what else could I have but in there to make it less confusing? I am trying to occasionally get away from the 'and then this happened, and then this happened...' pacing.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 122,000 words so far

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 21 – Ways to Cope

While Stark had provided electronic copies of all of the books Loki had previously had access to, he was not providing him with any new books. Stark was still upset that Loki had been able to contribute to his own expenses, meaning the money in his mother's account would last longer and therefore Stark would have to wait longer before he could request more 'alien' material from Frigga.

The mortal seemed to be determined to do anything he could to reduce the amount that Loki contributed to that fund. So much so that that Jarvis was allowed to order Loki anything he wanted from the internet so long as it was not dangerous or violated any of the safety protocols Stark had put into place. That last phrase however pretty much eliminating any and all art supplies of course much to Loki's disgust.

Jarvis deciding that clay was a prohibited item was just such an art supply frustration for the god. Doubtless he worried that Loki might carve runes in the wet clay. A possibility of course, but not at all what Loki wanted the clay for. He had been thinking more along the lines of a harmless looking sculpture that he could have used as a spirit trap for Stark. Nothing too elaborate, just something that he could have occasionally whispered ideas to. And if luck was with him, perhaps he could have come across a strand of hair of the man's hair someday to give it a little more push on Stark's thoughts. But sadly that idea was for naught due to Jarvis was being so stubborn.

Although, he did have to admit that in other ways Jarvis had become more than helpful with anything that would keep Loki busy without violating any of the rules Stark had laid down. It had taken him a while to realize that Jarvis would not get upset with him for asking for something repeatedly. This frankly amazed Loki, since he had several times argued just to see what it would take to make the spirit angry.

Granted bound spirits did not react the way the truly alive did, but even so Jarvis was more even tempered than any Loki had ever encountered. He had looked up the meaning of the term Artificial Intelligence, which is what Jarvis and Stark claimed he was, but Loki was not convinced that this was *all* that Jarvis was. While this was most unusual, it did mean that even if his temperament was artificial Jarvis' operating parameters were fluid and Loki was free to tweak the nature of his request until he found the borders of his restraints.

Loki smiled to himself, he found that to be very helpful indeed.

Jarvis still very much wanted him to provide Stark with certain information, but he did not for some reason hold it against Loki when he didn't. In fact on more than one occasion when Loki had questioned him on this he was told that, 'Sir needed a good puzzle' every now and then to keep him occupied. While that was an odd sentiment in many ways, Loki was not about to complain since rebounded to his benefit.

Per his agreement with Stark and Ms. Potts concerning his writing being done and stored electronically, Anything that Loki wrote was private unless he decided to share it. While Stark's keeper had promised that it would be, he had originally been quite skeptical, although Jarvis repeatedly claimed that he would not share any of Loki's private writings even with Stark.

And yes, Loki had been around enough double speak in the court that he did not miss the way the curious way that statement was worded. Not only did he not miss it, he in fact made great use of it over the next several months. And in honesty, knowing the man much better now, if he had knowledge of it Loki did not think that Stark had the mental filters to resist mentioning at least something concerning Loki's writings. So Jarvis and Ms. Potts seemed to have kept their word.

"What would you like to see this morning Mister Odinson?" Jarvis asked after he had finished breakfast and headed over towards the laundry room.

"What is left to view on the current Open Course Ware class from MIT Jarvis?" Loki asked as he placed his keyboard and drawing pad on top of several bags of towels that were first in line. He waited patiently for Jarvis to open the door to the laundry room and pulled that bin into the room, setting his hardware carefully on one of his work tables in case he needed to make some notes.

The god was well aware that his patience seemed to have more of a chemical than natural nature these days, but he considered this to be a small trade off when balanced against the reduction of nightmares and panic attacks.

Or they could also be reduced because the availability of Midgard's science almost in its entirety served as an excellent distraction, mental stimulus and quite often, source of amusement.

Something that would definitely not been available to him on Asgard and especially not in an Asgard prison. Although from his reading, he had learned it would apparently not have been something he could have readily accessed in a Midgardian prison either. So in many way he was fortunate to be where he was... Not that he would ever admit that to anyone.

OoooO

“So Ms. Potts will not be coming to dinner again? At all?” Loki said looking over at Tony after he had subjected the Tony’s living room to a surreptitious once over. His actions having the air of ‘It’s Friday and I’m here, so Ms. Potts should surely be here too’. Which made sense since Pepper after missing the first few had made a real effort to work her schedule since she had instigated the godly dinners almost a year ago.

Not that the god had seen a lot of either one of them over the last few months. The dinners had gotten a bit sporadic with either Tony convalescing or Pepper trying not to glow when Tony pissed her off. But he was feeling a lot better now, physically anyhow, and Pepper was cured, so that was good. Especially since she was aggravated at him again, this time for good she claimed. But she’d said that before...

So while he was hurting from Pepper leaving him, and had done his obligatory three day drunk down in the lab, at least this time it wasn’t from anything stupid that Tony had done. That meant he had a better than decent shot at a second chance. And hell even if that didn’t work out he and Pepper had parted friends, so he wouldn’t lose her completely. What he was feeling right now was kind of a coming and going sort of pain. And a coming and going sort of hope. This pretty much meant he was mostly feeling normal with the occasional dash of miserable, confused and or hopeful. But at least tonight he wasn’t feeling hung over, so he counted that as a triumph of sorts.

But as mixed up as his feelings were concerning Pepper, Tony couldn’t help but be a bit amused at the god’s confusion. While the god’s tone and expression were just that of a semi-interested person asking a question of marginal interest he could tell that Loki was upset.

When Tony wondered had he become experienced in the area of all things mood related in ‘Bag of Cat’s’ land? Perhaps some of Pepper’s people skills had rubbed off on him?

“Sure she will Rudolf, just not as often. But hey, you and I can still have dinner once a week.” Granted he normally didn’t have dinner with Loki unless Pepper was available. But since that wasn’t going to be happening any time soon, and maybe not for a really long time, Tony would have to be much more of a dick than he is to totally discontinue the one thing that Loki gets to do that resembles normal activity. Besides, he was pretty funny guy, in a stuck up snarky kind of way.

“We’ll just have to change it to Thursdays or something, that way if Pepper wants to come she can and everyone stills has their Fridays free...” Tony’s voice caught as he realized what he was inferring.

“Fridays free?”

“Date night,” Tony said shortly, his tone not inviting any additional questions on that Midgardian tradition. Not that he thought Pepper was going to run right out an date... But she most likely would increase her event appearances. She always did.

But there were no additional questions. The shadow of confusion on Loki’s face only lasted an instant until it was chased away by understanding. Understanding which in itself only lasted a

second before that turned to irritation as the god finally understood that Pepper and Tony were no longer a couple.

“By the nine Stark,” the god hissed stalking irritably into the living room before spinning around again to face Tony.

That surprised Tony a bit, since if you had asked him about it, he’d of bet good money that the god would have been overjoyed that he and Pepper were no longer engaged. After all, now he could make Tony’s life even more of a hell than it already was without worrying about getting on Pepper’s bad side. Heck, she might even be amused. She generally was when they both got into it, even if she did shut them down pretty quick.

“What did you do?” Loki demanded irately, accusing green eyes locked upon his brown ones.

“Nothing, honest it wasn’t me this time,” Tony replied automatically standing behind the big breakfast island unloading takeout containers before the realization kicked in that he didn’t have to explain himself to Loki. Hell if he didn’t explain it to himself; he certainly wasn’t going to wade into the deep treacherous waters of his and Pepper’s on and off again relationship with a freakily tall pain in the ass.

Tony had fully expected the first dinner he and Prince Pain in the Patootie had without Pepper to be a total crap-fest. But it wasn’t really. It was just a bit sad, the billionaire was mourning more the idea of a Pepper relationship, because honestly he’d pushed her away in the past and it was just payback for her to do it to him this time. While Loki was mourning the absence of the one person on Earthgard that had actually grown to like him, as surprising as that might have been.

But then Pepper always was a sucker for really well-mannered men. Not that that had ever inspired Tony to try harder in that department. Maybe if it had...

Anyhow, without Pepper to insist that they sit at the table, he and the god instead scattered all the take out boxes on the living room coffee table with a pile of disposable plates, napkins and cutlery; ate Thai, drank beer and shared their favorite Pepper stories... Which Tony had a lot more of naturally.

At one point while Loki was absent mindedly picking out all the red pepper strips from his Gai Pad Pongali, Tony leaned over and whispered, “Just eat it Slim Shady, you know how Pepper hates when you pick at stuff and make a mess.”

Loki actually stirred the chicken and onions bits back in and took a bite before he remembered that Tony couldn’t squeal on him to Pepper because Pepper wasn’t here.

“Very funny Stark,” he conceded giving him a halfhearted glare.

“Yeah, I thought so too,” Tony said with a smirk before passing him another Sankaty Light lager as a peace offering.

After they ate and cleaned up Tony couldn’t think of any conversational gambits that he was up for this evening.

Normally after dinner, they talked for a while and then once Loki had left Tony and Pepper would watch a movie. So it was like a tradition now. And having left his lab, cleaned up and eaten a real meal rather than drinking one Tony wasn’t much in the mood to return to work so he was going to watch a movie, Pepper or no Pepper. And the god was welcome to stay if he wanted to.

“So, Dasher, you want to stick around and watch a movie? Maybe have a few more beers?”

Not that Tony cared if he did or not mind you. He was after all a grown adult and could watch a movie by himself if he had to.

Loki eyed him for a few moments. “What kind of movie?” he asked suspiciously.

Apparently the god had not been fond of some of Tony’s Thursday evening selections over the last few months.

“Well certain not one of those lame ass documentaries you like to pick.” Tony grinned, having occasionally scanned Jarvis’ records of the god’s viewing habits. “Heck anything I’ve picked is better than those.”

The god rolled his eyes, “Oh yes, because ‘Indiana’ looking for a crystal skull, was the pinnacle of storytelling achievement.”

“You know it.” Tony said with a smirk.

Hey Tony liked Harrison Ford and the Indiana Jones franchise. However even he had to admit that besides Marian’s return nothing else in that particular movie was worth watching. Not that he would admit that to the Rock of Ages.

In the end they decided to compromise and honor the missing Pepper by watching something she would have liked. Not that Loki has any clue what that would have been.

And if Tony was beside himself with amusement at the idea of the Asgardian’s reaction to his first ‘Chick Flick’, well it did promise to be pretty funny.

“What do you suggest Jarvis?”

“Well sir, Ms. Potts was always partial to ‘Two Weeks Notice’,” the AI said. “She particularly enjoyed the part where Ms. Bullock tells Hugh Grant she’s quitting.”

Tony rolled his eyes, “Funny Jarvis. I think we’ll pass on that one.”

“Well she also likes Brokeback Mountain, shall I load that one for you sir?”

“Oh fuck you Jarvis,” Tony snapped, sliding a sidelong glance at Loki. “I think maybe we should pass on that one too in the interest of inter-tower peace. Look, just put Music and Lyrics on, ‘cause I don’t think I can take any more of your helpful suggestions tonight.”

Because Pepper did love her some Hugh Grant. Tony’s best present ever to her was the American Foundation for AIDS Research charity dinner that he wrangled them seats at the same table as both Grant and Sandra Bullock. Okay so it was Jarvis who pointed out the opportunity when the organizers approached him, but it was Tony that paid for the table, with a premium for picking the celebrities that joined them. Not that a guarantee of his presence wasn’t part of the deal Jarvis had cut with the charity, ‘cause he too could draw a crowd.

At any rate, it was amusing to watch as the god of really bad decisions sat with furled eyebrows trying desperately to understand various pop cultural references. The movie took forever to watch between Tony’s explanations, rewinding the movie so the god could re-watch the parts that were just explained to him and Rudolf’s pithy commentary on some of the personal interactions made him laugh so hard they had to pause the damn thing several times. Making the movie way more of a hoot to watch than Tony remembered. Next week they were planning on watching something action combat related so Tony could make fun of their weaponry and Loki could snark at their tactics.

Whoa, had Tony made plans to do it again next week? Yeah. Yeah he did. But a while later when Tony was alone, he reflected that having company meant Pepper's absence hadn't hurt as bad as he thought it would.

OoooO

While he missed the conversations he normally had with Ms. Potts, Loki was enjoying having dinner's with Stark by himself more than he thought possible. He had found out that without an audience to act up in front of, Stark was actually decent company.

Of course the fact that he seemed to be at least making an effort to be agreeable to Loki helped a lot. For instance it had been a surprise when Stark reframed from badgering him about other realm knowledge in the interests of keeping their evening cordial. even to the point of not following up on nuggets of information purposely dropped while watching a bunch of Saga's about the 'Federation of Earth' and a character called Spock who spouted the most laughable rubbish that Loki had ever heard and called it science.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes Stark I am positive."

"I don't know man; you could totally be his kid. I mean look at him. You guys share the same build, hair, hell you both have the whole high cheek bone and no humor what so ever thing going on. I'm willing to bet money that the Enterprise had a port call in Asgard."

"Except for the fact that I am older than him and I have a marvelously developed sense of humor, it's just that few people appreciate it."

"Yeah well okay. If you're sure," Tony had finally allowed before asking, "You going to eat that last fish taco or can I have it?"

OoooO

There is nothing Tony loves more than a car show. And while he also loves the crowds fawning all over him, he sometimes enjoys getting away from them by going to the VIP early afternoon sponsor event. That way he can see the new cars up close, without a bunch of pushy people getting in his way. Granted he gets all the attention he wants when he asks a question No matter how busy it is, but at the preview no one is breathing down his neck or crowding him. Besides knowing the people at the preview can afford dozens of new cars, the vendors put their most knowledgeable reps and their prettiest booth babes out during this select viewing time. So instead of some smarmy salesman he actually gets to talk to people who stone cold know all the specs on the cars he is looking at. And of course when he tires of looking at hand crafted leather seats, he can cast his gaze on other fine seats some of them also in clad in soft leather. And very few of them seeming to wear underwear.

Like that chick with the strange colored eyes smiling at him from the other side of the display, which Tony decides to stop and spend some time at. After talking to the Jaguar rep and of course checking out the cars displayed while Shortbabe smiled and chatted with them both Tony eventually released his rep to go deal with another potential customer that Tallbabe came over and informed him of.

"Say, how would you like to come over and watch some movies at my place tonight?" he asked the shorter of the two brunettes, the one with the gorgeous cinnamon colored eyes. Having picked up chicks at this venue before and Tony knows that once the VIP preview closes at six she should be

free until the next afternoon. “A little wine, a little takeout, a few movies, maybe something fun to do afterwards?” he grinned artlessly, looking out over the top of his Bentley Platinum sunglasses, which he of course wore in honor of the car show.

Cinnamon did a little almost involuntary bounce, which was very nice and extremely picturesque. “Really? Oh my gosh, I would love to Mister Stark,” she beamed with a wide luscious smile and those great looking eyes of hers all lit up...Until she looked over at her fellow booth babe.

“Problem?” Tony asked smiling.

“Let me guess, you’re her ride?”

“No.”

“Well yes.”

“Ummm, not exactly...,” she said, trying to paste the happy face back on, but not doing so well with her eyebrows puckered in consternation.

Tony wasn’t too worried; he still had time to revisit a few more booths. However he really did find the whole eyebrow thing too cute for words. Then apparently trying to think of a way to make this evening happen, she bit her bottom lip a bit.

Damn

Okay, he was going to fix this because he was definitely going to fuck this one tonight. No ifs, ands or cute jersey clad asses about it.

“Tell me what the problem is, I bet we can work it out.”

“We didn’t book a room in the city for tonight. We were going to rent a car and drive out to Yonkers and get a room there. Since we’re in the area we booked a portfolio shoot in the morning at the Untermyer Gardens.”

She and her friend exchanged glances, information flowing with every twitch of their well-shaped brows.

“So you two work together a lot?”

“Sort of...” the taller babe said in a dubious tone that indicated that it might not be the kind of work that Tony was thinking about.

Taller chick didn’t really look too receptive to that idea, no matter how much money Stark had... And really the thought hadn’t even crossed his mind until then.

Honestly.

But Tony was a problem solving kind of guy and he wasn’t going to let something fixable stand between him and chosen partner of the evening.

“Hey. I got an idea. My buddy’s younger brother is kinda staying with me, tall good looking guy. Maybe you’d like to join us this evening too?” He said smiling at Tallbabe. “And then when you two are ready to leave I could have my chauffeur or one of my security guards drive you wherever you want to go. Save you having to go through the hassle of renting a car and all that.”

They looked at each other, seriously considering his offer, which didn’t surprise him. Cinnamon

really wanted to make this work and Tallbabe had to be considering that anyone hanging around with a billionaire was either rich, prettier than fuck or incredibly well connected.

Or more than likely a combination of two out of the three.

“Hang on a minute; I think I have an embarrassing picture of him or something on my phone.”

Chapter End Notes

What is going on right now? This is me trying to be not so lineal. We'll see next chapter if it works. While I have another 80,000 words written, they aren't exactly finished chapters. Some are done but not polished, some are just scenes with the outline of what happens next. So.... I am contemplating a hold once we get to the end of part one so I can finish the damn thing. It was an interesting experiment, but I am not sure I am a fast enough writer to keep it up. How do people do this? I am in awe of them.

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Everything is Hitting the Fan

Chapter Summary

It's been really strange the last few years... and now Tony has extra Fury to sprinkle on top.

Chapter Notes

The Fury part of this was the chapter that started this fic. I really need to quit worrying about back story. *sigh*

I am pathologically unable to just write something that has no underpinning and tell the readers to just 'wing it okay?'. It's a sickness I tell you, I need help.

What was worse is that Chapter One/Tony at the Charity Auction was the only place I saw this beginning. I did say this was slow build, so I regret nothing there. Please see end notes on where and when this is going from here.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 22 - Everything is Hitting the Fan

Tony texted Jarvis to send him a picture of Loki from the security vids of a recent dinner.

“He didn’t want to come to the car show with you?” Cinnamon asked the delighted smile stealing back over her features.

“Naw, he isn’t into cars, but he couldn’t have come anyhow. He’s got into a bit of trouble so he is doing the whole Martha Steward home-bound thing. Since I’m a friend of the family he’s staying with me. His father’s a pretty powerful guy and not real happy with the whole ankle jewelry bit, so his mom arranged it for him to use my address.”

Tallbabe looked like she was having a few second thoughts no matter what pleading looked Cinnamon was tossing her way when Tony’s phone chimed, he pulled up the pic and held it out for them. “This is him. I knew I had a picture somewhere.”

Tallbabe looked impressed; Tony could tell she was wavering so he decided to help her a bit.

“Did I tell you he’s British?”

OoooO

“So ladies,” Tony gestured expansively as the door to his private elevator opened. This is my humble little abode. As expected the babes were pretty awed by his digs.

“Tell you what, why don’t I let you guys drop your stuff off in the guest room and freshen up a bit and while you’re doing that, I’ll order us some food, find us a movie and track down Lorin.”

Tony ushered them down the second hallway and opened the door to his first guest room. There are supplies in the bathroom if you don't want to fuss with opening up your bags," he said. A moment later he popped his head back in the still open door catching them in middle of a silent celebratory bounce.

His eyes crinkling with his smile he asked, "Oh, hey. I'm thinking Italian or Mexican, either of you have a preference?"

A short discussion later, Tony shut the door behind him and headed back towards the living room. "Jarvis Mexican for eight okay, get it from that La Palapa place? Make sure to get at least one order of that duck dish they have. Oh, and no calamari dishes this time. His highness doesn't like the look or smell of them."

Per his text, Jarvis had alerted Loki to the plan and one extremely confused, good looking godling was waiting with the Minion bot in Tony's small, mostly unused, office.

"You brought me a female?" Loki cocked his head to the side, obviously not entirely understanding why Tony was doing this or what Tony might be expecting of him in return.

"Look it's a gift okay, not that you can keep her or anything and you certainly don't owe me anything it's not that kind of transaction for Christ's sake. Hell it's not even really a gift, since I don't own her and I'm certainly not paying for her, it's not like she is a whore or anything."

Tony waved his hands distractedly trying to make the god understand, which was going to be a really good trick, since Tony didn't really understand why he was doing it. Certainly it solved his problem of getting that Cinnamon chick in the sack tonight... but the odds of something going catastrophically wrong were high enough that they should have given even Tony cause to pause... And make him think this through just a bit more.

Should have, but didn't.

"Look, I'm a billionaire; I know her friend is going to sleep with me. You, you're just the annoying little shit brother who is staying here while on house arrest. If she asks, tell her Martha Stewart isn't the only one who got in trouble for insider trading, she'll understand what you mean."

Loki gave him a look of extremely limited patience "Well that will make one of us Stark," he drawled.

"Insider trading, stock markets, Martha Stewart? Ring any bells?"

Apparently not.

Tony snatched up a tablet from the desk, opened a few windows and quickly googled the terms before slapping the tablet up against Loki's chest.

"Come on, I need to get changed, I can brief you through the door or something."

Pushing Loki ahead of him, Tony walked into his bedroom, kicked his shoes off, waving Loki to the couch before diving into the bathroom and calling out to the god, "Anyhow. If you want to get her in the sack you are on your own bud. No force, I hope I don't need to tell you Jarvis will alert me if there is any rough stuff."

Not bothering to look up from the tablet he was studying Loki huffed. "Please Stark; do you have any idea how long I have been convincing maidens to lose their clothes and their inhibitions? For much longer than you have been alive I assure you."

“Good. So no worries there.” Tony decided he needed a quick touch up shave.

“Jarvis did you and Loki have the safe sex talk yet like I asked you to?”

“Yes sir.”

Several minutes later Tony came out of the bathroom, patting his freshly shaved cheeks with the damp towel that was draped around his neck. “Look there are plenty of condoms in medicine cabinets of both guest bedrooms. If you get lucky under no circumstances go bare back. I’m pretty sure your mother would kill me if someone perused a paternity claim against you, besides I doubt if Odin wants any Earthgardian grandchildren. I would say use the bedroom at the end of the hallway, that way the girls have the first room to regroup in before leaving. Oh, and your name is Lorin, but don’t give them a last name, say you wouldn’t want to cause any more trouble for your family.”

Tony turned towards his dresser and snagged a watch on a wide leather cuff from the tray on his dresser, he quickly buckled it on before unbuttoning and shucking his shirt and throwing it towards his closet entrance.

“It’s all good,” he assured the god before pulling a fresh Metallica t-shirt out of his dresser skinning into it.

He looked over and saw that Loki had raised a neat eyebrow and was shaking his head at Tony’s fashion choices.

“Just worry about your own looks there Dasher,” Tony said his lip quirking lopsidedly as he smoothed his t-shirt down and headed towards the door. Just before he got there he stopped and turned towards Loki.

“Oh and good luck Silver Tongue, I hope you enjoy yourself.”

OoooO

If Tony had been worried that Tallbabe was going to be a bit difficult, those fears were laid to rest about two minutes after the ladies showed back up in the living room.

Stepping forward with a warm smile Loki said, “How lovely to meet you both, my name is Lorin.”

It turned out that Cinnamon’s name was Cynthia and Tallbabe was actually Grace. Which naturally the oily bastard went with, murmuring, “Of course it is,” as a delicate tint rose to her cheeks.

“Tony,” he purred, “perhaps while we are waiting for dinner, the ladies would like to go out on the patio for a few minutes.” He turned back to them and confided, “Tony has the most wonderful view of the city at sunset, truly a sight not to be missed.”

“You know what, that’s a great idea.” Tony agreed holding out a hand to Cinnamon, drawing her closer and putting his other arm around her waist.

Loki held out one arm, gesturing towards the terrace as he widened his eyes inquiringly. He smiled warmly down as Grace tossed him up a smile and let herself be guided along behind Tony and her friend.

And if there was an ice breaking strategy to standing out on the cool-ish patio watching a gorgeous sunset while the breeze picked up, well hey it worked, Tony thought contentedly. By the time the sun was fully down and the city lights had taken over, Cinnamon was firmly tucked against his

side with her arms around his waist, while Tallbabe had backed up to Loki's chest and pulled his arms warmly around her.

OoooO

Woken by the soft tapping on the bedroom door, Loki lifted his head a moment, trying unsuccessfully to blink sleep away. He heard low female voices, a few scuffles as clothes were gathered in the dim morning light and then soft lips found his and brushed against them with a pleased murmur. A brighter slice of light leaked in from the hall way through the slightly opened door, Grace's well curved body disappeared through it closing it quietly behind her.

Doubtless I should get up now, Loki thought languidly, warm contentment still pooled in the pit of his stomach.

But the bed was so comfortable and he was so pleasantly tired from the sweetest activity he could remember in years. Even though it was morning; Loki just couldn't bring himself to let this evening end yet. I'll just give the ladies enough time to shower and leave before I go out in the hall he decided.

Smiling into the pillow he clutched Loki let his eyes drift shut as sleep claimed him again.

OoooO

Tony was a problem solver. He'd solved lots of them over the last five years, the Ten Rings, Obie betraying him, Vanko's attack, an alien invasion, a Nuke launched towards New York, Loki's containment, Pepper's Extremis exposure, his shrapnel problem... Actually pretty much anything life has thrown him the last five years or so. He still had a few he was working on like mainstreaming his arc reactors, keeping SHIELD off Bruce's ass, convincing a his captive god to play nice with Rainbow Bridge info, which was not pimping for science no matter what it looked like, converting the his old family manor into quarters for the Avengers, and keeping enough innovations moving through the pipeline to keep Pepper happy. The last one of course being a never ending story, which he totally did not do trying to get back on her good side. Or at least stay off her bad side.

And Pepper wonders why I don't sleep much.

"Sir, Director Fury and seven SHIELD agents are in the lobby. Several of the agents are quite heavily armed. Director Fury seems very upset wants to speak to you immediately."

SHIELD also went into his never ending story file. They were always yammering about something they wanted him to do or to fix or to pay for. Tony Stark was a genius, billionaire, playboy and philanthropist. He was also dead tired, slightly hung over and frustrated as hell with the progress on his current innovation. So of course this would be the day that Fury decided to come visit him over whatever stupid thing had the one-eyed freak's panties in a twist this week.

Crap.

"Jarvis, give me a visual will ya?" Tony asked him tiredly, closing down the files he had been working on.

Jarvis obligingly flashed video from three angles of the lobby onto Tony's work screens.

Okay. This was different. "Seriously Jarvis? Heavily Armed? The only thing they're missing is a tank."

“Stark, I know you’re watching this by now.” The bald headed, dark skinned, eye patched Director of SHIELD bellowed. “Open this god damn elevator before I blow this building and your punk ass sky high.”

Oh Jesus, Mary and Joseph this is all I fricking need right now.

Disgusted to the point of reciting a litany remembered from the elderly housekeeper they had when Tony was a child; he dug his cell phone out of his pocket. Yes, he could have used Jarvis to make the call, but there was something so soothing about screaming into a handset. Besides, he did not need Fury yelling at the ceiling of his building lobby and creating more of a scene that all the armed goons were already making. It was crap like this that made his conversations with Pepper testy.

Tony watched the screen as Renegade by Styx began to play in his lobby. It took a minute for Fury answer, mainly because that wasn’t one of the ring tones he had programmed into his phone.

“Stark, I have told you before not to mess with my ring tones,” the director snarled into his phone.

“Yeah. Yeah, ya did. But why should I listen to you when you never listen to me. I have told you before not to bring your flying monkeys into my building. Except for Coulson, I allow the head monkey access because he such a sweetie and I am just that kind of nice guy.” Tony drawled in an amused tone that was finely calculated to make Nick Fury’s blood pressure spike.

“Open the damn elevator Stark,” demanded Fury.

“Nope, not going to happen until you get rid of your gun toting flunkies. You and Coulson, that’s it. No one else.” Tony replied firmly.

Fury stared sourly into one of the camera pickups for a moment before snapping his phone shut and giving Coulson instructions in super-secret spy sign language. It didn’t take long before there was only Fury, Coulson and one other non-bazooka totting agent, who was sent to go stand by the doors leading out to the street, left in his lobby. Since there was no reason to guard those doors, the extra agent’s presence was a *‘you can’t tell me what to do’* gesture on Fury’s part.

Tony briefly debated hanging tough for the whole *‘There Can Be Only Two’* rule. However since all the other agents who left also got into transportation and left the area entirely in a SHEILD show of good faith, Tony decided to extend his own small olive branch by letting SHIELD uselessly guard one of his tower’s lobby doors.

“Jarvis, bring them up to the entertainment floor with the main elevator, lock all the entrances to anywhere else on my floors, definitely make sure our ‘special guest’ area is secure and look sharp, I don’t want any assassins roaming around in my duct work, I don’t want any bugs planted in the elevator or anywhere else.”

“I understand sir.”

The reason Tony chose to receive them on the entertainment floor was that it contained mostly futuristic Charles and Ray Eames hard surfaced furniture, lots of open area and a polished stone floor. While beautiful, it was a sparse area, easy to clean after a big party and had almost nowhere that bugs could be planted and stay undetected.

From the lopsided smirk on Fury’s face, Tony was pretty sure he knew why there were meeting here, rather than his personal space.

“Hey guys,” Tony called from behind the bar, “You want anything to drink?” he asked, keeping his

tone light and friendly but not really putting any effort into making them believe he was in a 'good buddy' mood.

As usually with those two the answer was no, so Tony pointed to a seating area and wandered over to sit across from the area indicated. Also as usual, Fury sat and Coulson stood beside the couch in attendance on the dictator.

Director.

Whatever.

"So," he said, putting down his little mid-day pick-me-up, which he had no intentions of drinking while they were in his tower. "To what do I owe the honor of your visit?"

"I want to know why an MIT student, has been trying to hack a Stark Industries servers looking for information on self-published books that are being sold on Amazon, iBookstore and Barnes & Noble. His area of interest was a clever little physics publication; but he was also gathering information on all the books from put out by the vanity publisher, LSWalker LLC.

"Gosh Nick. I'm not sure what to tell you, I normally can get a real publisher. Hell, Engineering News Record and Connected World are always bugging me to submit articles to them or use their publishing branch for my authorized autobiography or something." Tony leaned back leering a bit at both men. "I mean Peggy Smedley of Connected World is a doll, and I do have a thing for smart brunettes, but I haven't really published since I got out of college. I am a big fan of the '*All my ideas make money so why give them away for free*' point of view, but they still try bless their hearts."

"I'm not talking dead tree editions Stark, these are all in KF8 or DRM protected ePub format." Fury snarled as he leaned forward glaring at Tony so hard he almost needed another eye to channel his wrath.

Tony gifted him with a sweet smile as he pulled out his phone and started fiddling with it. Ah. Jarvis was of course on the ball and there was a lovely little synopsis of why Fury was currently darkening his door. Ever the consummate show man, Tony did not let the Jarvis' little surprise show on his face, but he made a mental note to weigh the pros and cons of disassembling all of Jarvis' servers this evening.

Tony hits a few of the links Jarvis provided, and skimmed those pages while waiting for Fury to get done glaring at him. Of course the reason for Fury's visit would have to be the cause of one of Tony's persistent irritations and potential disaster in waiting, because that was just how his luck ran these days.

Sheesh.

"So. Coulson. How's it hanging for you these days? I do hope Big Daddy One Eye isn't tiring you out too much after your miraculous return from the grave." He asked, trying to shift the conversation to a different topic while twisting the knife a bit. He was still pretty peeved that Fury had lied and manipulated them using Coulson's 'death'.

Standing beside Fury, hands folded neatly in front of him, Coulson regarded the engineer as expressionless as ever. "Well Stark, except for all the extra reading I have had to do the last few days, it's going well thank you." The well-ordered agent cocked his head slightly. Tony noticed just the faintest shine of silver in the brown that hadn't been there before Coulson's little heli-carrier adventure.

“I must say,” Coulson continued with an approving little nod, “That the books I have been reading are certainly much better written than your normal self-published fare, particularly the dissertation of the advantages and disadvantages of absolute rule as a political model.”

Okay, Tony thought. Obviously, I am not going to be able to pull a topic shift, at least not until I get whatever message Nicky is trying to lay down.

“Great, glad to hear you’ve been able to relax with a good book.” Tony laughed a little self-deprecatingly, “I don’t often do but I’m glad you’re enjoying yourself.”

“Oh, I wouldn’t say that,” Coulson said.

Of course you wouldn’t. My luck isn’t that good today.

Coulson continued, “It’s not easy to relax when you have a bunch of SHIELD’s best scientists yammering at you every minute of the day to find the author of a publication.”

Seriously?

Tony couldn’t help but smirk. “So what’s so hard about that, you guys are spies for heaven’s sake, finding people is what you do.”

Coulson stuck his lower lip out a bit, with a little inclination of his head to show agreement, but before he could reply Fury jumped in.

“You would think wouldn’t you? Unfortunately Stark, the author is using a pseudonym. Since there is no address or contact information for the publisher besides a blind email drop and a post office box. Also, there are stylistic indications that all of the books are being ghost written with the same co-writer, since which means someone has contacted at least one of the publisher’s employees somehow. We of course did attempt to contact the other authors that publish with LSWalker, but they all appear to be pseudonym’s also. Or at least the people we can track down with matching names are definitely not the people who wrote the books.”

Fury’s mouth twitched up on one side in an evil parody of a smile. “And just when we are at a standstill, one of our white hat informants clued us in on someone attempting to get into Stark Industries computers. And that investigation leads us, by way of the barn, to you.”

“Me?” Tony scoffs, “You think I am writing all these books you are interested in?”

Fury just glares at him, but Coulson actually has an expression, which Tony is pretty sure is against the SHIELD policy.

“Actually Stark,” says old Mister Smug Face Coulson, “I’m hoping you didn’t, because if you did... Well, that tells me more about you than I want to know, which is a problem since I’m supposed to already know everything about you.” Coulson looked like he was having a hard time not laughing. “But if you did write them, Agent Hill and some of the bridge crew really want to talk to you about when a sequel is going to be out for your last... Bodice ripper, ‘Pacific Island Pleasure’.

It was days like today that made Tony wish that ten years ago he had bought and retired on a pacific island. As a recluse. A drunk one. Tony’s phone chirped and he glanced down at it. Tony wanted to groan, but he settled for raising a brow quizzically and glaring up at Coulson.

“You’re shitting me right?”

Maybe he won't wait until they leave for that drink.

"I wish the fuck he was," growled Fury tossing a pissed look over his shoulder at his number one agent. "Somebody," he growled, "Was overheard talking about the story by a member of the bridge crew. By the next day several agents on the damn shift had ordered and downloaded it. By the end of that day, a dozen more of them were either trying to borrow readers from their friend that already owned it or planned to buy their own copy.

Tony idly tapped his phone screen a few times, before picking up his drink and taking a large swallow. Hey, he deserved it.

"Which brings us back to you Stark," Fury's lips thinned in displeasure. "How is it that the profits for all the books from this publisher go to this shiny new LLC, which then blindly deposits the money in a bank account that occasionally pays for things that get delivered to your tower?"

Okay, not good, but not impossible, he was Tony Fucking Stark after all and he could bullshit his way out anything.

"Well, well, well. Apparently I have some very enterprising employees here." Tony said pensively as he stroked his thumb across his goatee. "I wonder if it is the ladies in the cafeteria or the human resources department." He laughed at Fury's goaded expression. "Hey it shows good team work that they could get together on something like this, all that in-service training that we do is obviously paying off."

"Stark..."

Shaking his head dismissively, Tony chided the director. "Oh, come on. What's being ordered? Bomb parts? Drugs?" He perked up facetiously and asked with a mocking lilt, "Hookers?"

Fury huffed as Coulson consulted a small note pad before replying. "No Stark no hookers, which is one of the things that made me think maybe it wasn't you."

Tony's face instantly darkened, "Hey!" He growled, irritated at Fury's number one boy, "You know I don't pay for it."

"Sure you do Stark; you just use opportunity instead of money." Coulson said calmly looking down at Tony.

Fury snorted and curled his lip up at Tony's outraged huff.

It's an odd list, and if it weren't for all the science books being purchased on cd, I might buy the Cafeteria employees since the rest of the stuff is chocolate, candy, men's hiking socks and a pair of Wicked Good Slippers."

"Sir, I am afraid that Ms. Potts needs you in her office rather urgently. She said it's a matter of the utmost importance."

"Okay Jarvis, tell her I'll be right down." Tony stood up, draining the last of his drink and motioning them to the main elevator. "Well as always, it's been a blast guys. We'll have to do it again sometime when it won't cost me thousands of dollars in lost productivity to chat with you two."

"Stark, we aren't finished ye--"

"Yeah Nick we are. I apparently have employees who have decided to form a publishing company.

They should have come to me, I'm sure I could have got them better deal and free publicity. But ya know what; I admire the fact that they wanted to do it on their own, shows initiative." He ushered the two SHIELD agents towards the main elevator.

"Starrk...."

"And it shows a lot of teamwork, maybe not too many brains but... Whatever..."

"Whoever wrote the physics book must have brains, it has all our scientists in an uproar." Fury said coldly.

"So one of the cafeteria staff maybe talked one of our engineers into publishing with them. And not to start a fight or anything Nicky, but your guys would get excited watching Bill Nye the Science Guy," Tony said studiously ignoring Coulson's skeptical look.

"Jarvis, call up my private elevator."

Skepticism flitted across Fury's face as Tony all but shoved them in the main elevator. Fury stopped abruptly, right in the way of the doors and glared down at Tony, mouth tight with aggravation. "That was a decent snow job Stark, but I suggest you rethink this." As Tony opened his mouth to retort, Fury continued, "I will be especially interested in which department your cafeteria ladies recruited a writer who was an expert in Norse History and Myths." Fury took step back.

"I want to debrief that one too, when you figure out who it is." Fury said as the elevator doors closed.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

And..... this is pretty much where I have to pause the story. I totally am hating not having the rest finished and I want to do that before I post anymore. I have a lot already written, but I have a lot of gaps too.

I decided over Christmas to rip the bandage off and post most of what was finished over the holidays as an apology for the pause before the rest is posted. I'm hoping a few weeks, but we will see. I just don't like being unable to go back and trim or tighten stuff because then it won't mesh with what is already posted.

When I do finish it, I want to post several chapters a week, so I hope you'll keep an eye out for the rest. I am particularly looking forward to posting Tony's meeting with Odin. Oh.. and Mortal Nip.

I already have another 60,000 words for the second half, so I do hope that if you haven't subscribed yet, you take a chance on the back side and subscribe now. Thanks so much to all who have commented, bookmarked and subscribed.

,

Tony Rambles

Chapter Summary

Pepper puts Tony in bondage vile, or at least that is the way Tony sees it.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

OoooO OoooO OoooO OoooO

Welcome back from the break! – – Our story so far... Tony and Frigga make the deal, bribes are offered and accepted, Pepper is not happy, neither apparently is Odin. Loki's physical injuries are cured but his mental issues are causing new ones. Tony is meh, Bruce and Pepper get excited about them. Oh and Loki makes a break for freedom and does a little freefall, Tony is very much not amused. Loki takes issue with Tony's accounting practices and starts his own prison work shop. Mom saves money, but Tony can't get any new material. The Loki Exercise channel is a big hit... at least with Tony. Fury comes to visit. He wants to know who is behind publishing company with ties to Stark Industries. Fury is curious about the political, scientific and historical writing. The bridge crew of the HeliCarrier just want to know when the sequel to a certain smut filled bodice ripper will be released. Phil is not amused. Whew... Okay? Everyone up to speed again? Here we go!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 23 –Tony Rambles

Tony is kind of amazed that Fury's visit went as well as it did. He's kind of been waiting for something like this to happen since the god arrived three years ago. But all the same, Fury knows that something is going on and that itsconnected to Stark Tower, however he doesn't really know what the full story is. Just like Pepper knows that something is going on with Tony sleeping around since they split up, but not really.

It's been over six months since he and Loki had started dinner and movie night without Pepper and maybe three weeks since the last time Tony has brought home company and shared it with the god.

An action that should probably bother Tony, but he refused to feel bad about that. Until he started paying attention to it, he'd never added up how many times his preferred partner of the evening had a friend she didn't want to leave. Not a lot of course, he is Tony 'Fucking' Stark after all and there were plenty of women that would knife the person in front of them for a chance to be with him. But...

Those types of women weren't always his first picks and they weren't really the ones he was interested in these days. Nor was he interested in the ones that were so self-centered that they went to these events alone so that they could dedicate their evening to making an advantageous connection. He slept with them obviously because he was a guy... And... Well... Some of them were too good looking for words... Even if they weren't necessarily good for any activity other than just sex.

At any rate, Tony had of course known that a lot of women travelled in packs, but until now he must have blocked his awareness of how many of them were actually looking for someone with a wingman for their bestie to hang with. This was, he thought, purely a chick thing, since guys really didn't care if their hook-up de jour had a friend that would play nice with their friend.

Seriously not a guy thing. But hell, maybe it was some sort of 'Safety in Numbers' female thing. Who knew?

At any rate, since girls running in packs were not always agreeable to a threesome, having a hot looking wingman tucked away and available at a moment's notice had actually been quite helpful on three occasions already.

He wondered if they should have a poker night instead of movie night the next time. Gandalf would kill himself before he backed down from something as simple as a mortal card game, especially in front of company. Tony would even be willing to throw a few games and see if he could sucker Rudolf and the ladies into a game of strip poker. That would be hysterical and quite a feast for the eyes and all. Unless of course Three Card Stud was a game played in fairy land, which he doubted.

Besides, it was occasionally fun to have people to hang with rather than just diving headlong into an evening of mind blowing sex. And the girls seemed to be most appreciative that they actually had a mini-date with him, rather than just a closing time hook-up. Some of them were very, very appreciative.

Tony smiled to himself at the memory of two of his last mini-dates. If he had to be honest, he would admit at least privately... that the drinking till just this side of plastered, fucking and falling into a drunken stupor got boring. It also had gotten old drinking in a noisy club, surrounded by people he didn't necessarily want to be with. So what if he sometimes liked a fun evening at home before nailing his date du jour into the mattress? It didn't necessarily mean he was slowing down or anything.

Tony absolutely refused to feel bad about any of it.

He had company to watch a movie with, got to fuck the object of his admittedly fleeting attention and the petulant prince was less petulant after he got some mellow time with Attention's friend. And if Tony also got additional payback the next week during dinner and movie night from Flawed Design by way of science snippets... Then quite honestly as far as Tony was concerned it was all good.

It amused him that Loki seemed to think that Tony's 'good behaviour', should be rewarded. He still wouldn't answer any of Tony's direct question, but during dinner on the week following a group date night, the godling would expound on a few topics of his choice, the last time being the historical uses of that Cavorite alloy and adaptations that had been successfully tried but were not being pursued due to cultural differences even though they worked just fine.

This was obviously Loki's polite way of implying that Thor was not the only decision maker on Asgard a few watts shy of a full charge.

And as some smart ass god once said if you want a fish to swim, it needs water in its bowl. So if Tony has filled the bowl enough that the conversation occasionally swims into Tony hinting that he needs clarification on some information he has already bought and paid for... The god will give him a quiet knowing look and discuss the matter with him without demanding a new deal. Of course the internet access deal is really Tony's only substantial information exchange agreement to date, but Merlin has dropped a few other tidbits here and there...

And one of these days Tony is going to figure out what Uru is, since it seems to be so important in Space Viking-land.

Granted, after the first 'social event' went so successfully, Tony could have tried to make it his second deal and work an agreement for information in exchange for future 'Happy Times'... Not that he thought about it for more than a few minutes. Or maybe an hour.

Okay fine, most of the afternoon.

In the end Tony regretfully decided that such a deal would be just way too pimp for him. Yeah, he had joked with himself that he would 'pimp for science', but it was only a joke. Tony is not up to being that kind of supplier, even if he had admitted that he had thought about it, briefly, he just can't do it. Not that Pepper would allow him to live if he had decided to pull a deal like that.

And she would find out. Jarvis may be his, but over the years Tony has issued her enough override codes that he can't be one hundred percent sure he could ever cancel all of them. Especially since Jarvis himself seems to occasionally leak stuff to her for Tony's own good, claiming of course that Pepper had previously used one of the codes to instruct him... Or bullshit to that effect.

Whatever. Tony has a god to question about why a certain one eyed leather freak found it necessary to visit him. And said god better have some skippy fucking good answers.

But with the best will in the world, Tony didn't get any of the answers he wanted that afternoon. What he had thought was a ruse to get Fury to leave, actually was an urgent meeting with Pepper about the Austrian Arc Reactor installation. Which was why he was sitting in her office waiting for her to get off the damn phone.

A meeting with Fury and Pepper both in the same day. His life sucked.

OoooO

Pepper obviously hated him.

Despite his protests, Tony and a team of his engineers were going to have to make a quick trip to Europe. Complete with an inflight conference call so they could hit the ground running.

Hippy Frickin' skippy.

Between his New York engineers, the Austrian Project manager and his engineers and Pepper calling for a briefing once they had all finally left him alone Tony didn't even have a long enough break to have a damn phone conference with his annoying house guest.

And by the next morning Tony found he had more pressing issues than the ones brought up by that cranky one-eyed, trench coated dictator.

Seriously more pressing... And for the record... He hated when Pepper was right.

Tony had tried to convince Pepper that he could settle the most important problems via a

conference call, but she was adamant that he should troubleshoot the new design in person. And she told him so with dangerously narrowed eyes. Who could argue with that?

“Tony, we need this installation to go smoothly. This is an unproven design that we’ve talked this company into accepting.”

“Pep, I’m telling you it will be fine, it’s a great design, it will save us boatloads of money just in the construction costs, plus it will be three times more cost effective to run.”

While Tony was talking, Pepper just tapped one long pale manicured nail on her project file until he finally wound down with another desperate plea to work this one by phone.

“NOoooOoo,” Pepper stretched the word out while she considered Tony. Her voice was as final as a piston rod through an engine block. “I don’t think so. There may be more to this than the Austrian group thinks. You need to handle this fast, I want Grade A Tony Stark Charm from the minute you land until you are back over the ocean heading home. Otherwise we might be back to square one over in Europe.”

Pepper’s face became very still, the hand that had been tapping on the file clenched for a moment and then pressed flat against the folder below it. “I do hope you have been paying enough attention to the reports I’ve sent you to know what that will mean for Stark International, Tony.”

Well it not like he ever read them but...Pepper had started having Jarvis hitting the high points when he was otherwise... indisposed. Who knew that an ill-advised chili cheese dog with double onions would mean he was actually aware of the report she was referring to.

“Okay, I get it; it would be bad, but...”

“But nothing. You have an hour to get all the files you need ready. I’m sending one of my aides up to pack for you. You will be on that plane when it rolls out of here at three. By three thirty I expect all of you to be working on a solution.”

Disgruntled, Tony stood. He knew this was important, but he didn’t have to like it.

Pepper cocked her head studying him as if to see how much of his best effort she was going to get.

“Oh, and Tony?”

“Yeah?”

“I want everyone on board to know what the solution is too. I don’t want anyone to get off that plane until they know as well as you do what happened and how to fix it so it never happens again. Do you understand me?”

He couldn’t just fix it and tell them what to do? Explanations? Training? Okay, now he liked this trip a lot less.

And Tony hadn’t thought that would be possible.

Pepper was totally a bitch.

OoooO

It was over a week before Tony got back to New York. Of course, it hadn’t taken that long to solve the problem. A problem that was more a fault of the construction crews than the original design,

but Tony could see how it had happened and changes were made so it would never happen again. Because damn it, if Tony Stark was going to fix something, it was damn well going to stay fixed.

The delay in his return was due to Pepper taking totally unfair advantage of him being in Europe and arranging a fuckton of meetings with various SI groups and potential customers. Who were naturally delighted and flattered to actually get the attentions of 'The Tony Stark' himself. So delighted that SI already had one fence sitter who decided to turn their proposal into a signed contract and there were two others in the process of being signed.

Tony just hoped the success of his impromptu European tour didn't give Pepper any ideas about sending him out on a regular basis to drum up business and make nice with their various offices.

But finally, *finally* he was home again, though of course he would feel better about it if he wasn't so damn tired and hungover. Tony had had quite enough face time with his engineers, so they were sent home on commercial flights while he invited that cute little brunette from the hotel bar to fly home with him. They drank, screwed and at last slept their way back to New York in the bedroom of his chartered jet. Activities which were definitely Tony's favorite ways to deal with the tedium of a transatlantic flight. When they'd arrived in New York, Tony had taken her to lunch at the Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse, set her up at the spa while she waited for her flight back and forgot about her.

Having caught up with Pepper on the drive back to the tower, Tony was for the first time in over a week free to pursue his own agenda. After he takes something for this damn headache of course.

OoooO

"Jarvis, what in the hell was I going to do this evening?" Tony asked rubbing the heel of his palm into sleep crusted eyes.

"You were getting ready to go talk to Mister Odinson about Director Fury's visit last week sir," The AI said almost sighing.

"Sir, do you think perhaps you should go back to sleep and just take care of this in the morning? You really don't get the recommended amount of rest that you should."

"Don't be ridiculous Jarvis, there is nothing wrong with me."

"If you say so sir," Jarvis' tone indicating that Tony was wrong yet again and that yes there most certainly were several things wrong with his creator that called for a check-up from his personal doctor rather than just a few more hours of sleep.

OoooO

Any time that Tony checks on Merlin while he isn't exercising, which isn't that often to be honest, the god seems to be typing or on the internet. Oh Tony knows he is also doing laundry of course, but he seems to have that down to such a science that he doesn't spend much time doing it. At least he must not, since Tony's random checks seldom catch him in the act. Or sleeping either come to think of it. Nope, Loki's main non-exercise activity seems to be typing.

"Jarvis, refresh my memory, what is he writing that has Fury's panties in a wad? And how the hell did I not know about it?"

Tony can't help but shake his head at Jarvis' heartfelt sigh. Especially since Jarvis 'A' doesn't have a heart. And 'B' is much more worried about Tony's health and recent scattered attention span than Tony is.

"Various topics sir," Jarvis said, weariness coating every electronic syllable. "Depending on the day and how bored he is. And everything that became public knowledge, I sent you a copy of. To date, I do not believe you have accessed any of the files I sent you."

"No one likes a smart ass Jarvis, since you control the server you know damn well I didn't. What I want to know is why didn't you try harder to bring this crap to my attention?"

Clothes, he needs to find some clothes, preferably comfy ones. Tony decided that sweat pants and a cropped sleeve sweat shirt will fit the bill admirably. Oh and his leather cuff watch, he definitely doesn't want to forget that.

"If sir will recall you told me you weren't interested."

"This wouldn't have happened to occur while I was drunk would it?" Tony asked sarcastically, knowing full well what the answer would be.

"Yes sir, but it is sometimes difficult to find a time to talk to you when you aren't preoccupied or... impaired. I did try to bring it to your attention again but you told me you didn't want to hear about it."

"Fine. You know what Jarvis? Let's just drop it."

There is no way Tony is going to argue with Jarvis on this topic. Even if he wins he loses, so it is best to just move on. "You said various topics. Various topics like what?"

"Well sir, Mister Odinson has published a collection of Norse legends, a guide to everyday life in a Viking community, two treatise debunking various primitive scientific beliefs, three romances, two of them of the more modern steamy variety and a dissertation of the advantages and disadvantages of absolute rule as a political model in the modern world."

Tony's attention had been caught by the scientific belief papers, but before he could even formulate a question for Jarvis, his entire thought process was derailed by the reminder that an ancient god of mischief was locked up in his tower spending his days writing romance stories, among other things. Smutty ones even.

How fucking freaky was that?

"Racy Romance stories? You're kidding me aren't you?" Tony asked, not quite sure how he was going to could get his head around that one.

"No sir. Mister Odinson had read all the books in your private library, so I gave him several that Ms. Potts had finished. Once he had read those, I took the liberty of borrowing a large number of books that had never been retrieved from the lost and found desk. Quite a few of those were romances." The AI replied. "Of all the self-published books they sell the best, so he decided to try using them to draw interest to his other more serious works."

Tony was pretty stunned. The Menace of New York read romances? And then wrote this own romance stories? To get his other stuff noticed? What are the odds?

"Loki writes romance stories..." Tony slowly said in a bemused voice that thought still crowding out all the others. "Jarvis, I think hell will be freezing over tomorrow."

"I wouldn't know about that sir, but tomorrow's temperature for the New York metropolitan area is forecasted to be quite warm. Mister Odinson also has a large body of unpublished work, some merely outlines, but others quite well along towards completion."

“Any more romances due out soon?” Tony asked curiously, this afternoon’s headache and stiff muscles well on their way to being forgotten and he bent over to tie his sneakers.

“One sir. It is the sequel that Agent Hill and the helicarrier bridge crew were interested in. It is his best seller.” Jarvis sounded more than a little amused.

“Well let’s go see what Emily Brontë is working on today shall we.” Tony said with a smirk of his own as he bounced towards the elevator.

What were the odds that checking on a non-exercising Loki could be so entertaining? How often did a failed world conqueror and ex-god decide to write romance and smut novels to pass the time?

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment or review kind of person then Bookmarks would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have Bookmarked and Commented in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies and Mima Mai. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Science, Politics and Smut explained

Chapter Summary

Job offers for Loki. Descriptive prose for Tony.

Chapter Notes

Not pertaining to this story at all. But two of the four commissions I ordered for my Loki & Tony fic are posted. Check them out if you have a minute.

How Desperate Are You - Chapter 19 - Loki and Thor - CHARGE! Art by LePeru - <http://archiveofourown.org/works/778956/chapters/2528929>

Desperate for Change -Chapter 12 Loki and Darcy - Midnight Visitor Art by LePeru - <http://archiveofourown.org/works/943697/chapters/2532460>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 24 – Science, Politics and Smut

Loki's floor was mostly dark with the exception of a small pool of light coming from the elevator and Loki's always illuminated cell, a glowing frosted square towards the center of the floor. Due to the god's insistence on not paying for lighting in areas that he wasn't using, the lights on the rest of the floor were turned off. But it still wasn't totally dark. Stark Tower's accent lighting as well as the architectural lighting from neighboring buildings provided a faint ambient light that was just bright enough that the dark had shadows.

Only a god of mischief could accomplish making the dark seem darker, Tony thought vaguely, troubled by the gloom. Tony was used to bright lights in his work area and thanks to Jarvis; he never had to enter a room that wasn't well lit unless he specifically requested it. Normally Tony only walked around in dimly lit rooms when he was hung over or massively depressed, so he did not associate the lack of light with happy thoughts.

When he wasn't depressed, Tony was very much a 'Let there be light', kind of guy.

Shaking off the small case of the dismals that the ill-lit floor caused him, Tony walked over to the cell, knocking on the first door as Jarvis unfrosted the glass. The view presented to him made him want to smile.

Oh okay. Snicker.

If pouting and scowling ever became Olympic sports, the Norse gods would, without a doubt, have a gold medal winner for each event. All courtesy of Frigga's little trickster. As soon as the glass cleared, Loki's eyes scanned the area looking to see why. When he noticed Tony approaching him, the god's nine point six pout immediately turned into at least a perfect ten scowl. Even the French judges would have given him full marks, Tony thought.

The scowl was just that good.

The godling was dressed in a thin tight wife beater, or t-tank as they now had to be called if one wanted to be politically correct, a pair of black jersey-knit pants and a pair of thick black socks, one of which bulged slightly from the taser cuff underneath it. Loki was seated with his knees drawn up on the narrow bed, the screen over his desk clearly showing that he had been in the middle of reading something online. He must have sat on the bed, leaving the chair free at Jarvis' request, hence the reason for his original pout which began to morph into a sour scowl after Tony's interruption.

This evening's little tête-à-tête could definitely become a wee bit confrontational unlike the more mellow meetings their usual dinner and movie nights had turned into. But a scowl was better than outright hostility, which is where Tony didn't want this to go and was why he hadn't put on his suit. Wearing the suit was guaranteed to make the god think of nothing but physical confrontation.

Not that he could win against it, but somehow Tony didn't think Mischief Managed had gotten that memo yet.

While Tony didn't think the god would lose it, if he made any kind of threatening moves, Jarvis had orders to make the ankle cuff taser Loki until he drooled. Which Jarvis, being Jarvis, had probably explained to the disgruntled godling.

Hence the pouting like a five year old.

Since Loki had forcibly gone paperless due to his little Houdini episode, his desk was always clear, so Tony decided that a little physical height advantage would not go amiss. Ignoring the chair, he seated himself on the desk with a small hop.

"Hey guess who came and visited me last week?" Tony asked idly just trying to get the conversational ball rolling.

Rolling his eyes, because there was no way in Asgard that Loki would have a prayer of knowing, Loki drawled, "I'm sure I have no idea Stark."

"Let me give you a hint - it's something to do with a very scary guy covered in leather and wearing an eye patch." Tony was just messing with the god and was in no way expecting to see him freak-out.

"O-Odin?" Loki whispered, half afraid, half hopeful. But it was telling that Loki wrapped his arms tightly around his knees and the blood drained away from his face.

Tony wondered if the guy was going to start glowing in the dark, since that would be the only way the Loki could get any paler.

"Who?"

Crap Tony, way to go. Didn't Odin supposedly only have one eye? Of course he would think it was his dad, I bet all Space Vikings wear leather like Thor does, it occurred to Tony as he silently analyzed Loki's reaction. Great now you got his hopes up, he thought.

Adding it all up however, the god's overall look might more correctly be described as 'stricken'.

Or not.

"Aw jeeze. No Merlin, not your dad." Tony slapped himself in the forehead for forgetting, again,

that the god didn't remember his last visit to Earthgard.

"Sorry dude. Stupid joke. One eye, lots of leather, bad attitude. His name is Fury, which is appropriate in a weird way when you consider his temper and--" Tony cut off his ramble before it took him someplace he didn't want to be, dropping his hand down he gripped both the table and his inane desire to 'chatter'.

Loki's expression flickered from hopeful to panicked and back again.

"Anyhow. Your books have caught the attention of one of our government agencies. Which I gotta tell you Rudolf, is not a good thing since we are trying to keep your presence here on the down low." Tony had tried; many times to imagine what would happen if Loki's presence was discovered in the Tower, but in self-preservation his mind kept shying away from the thought. Although the few mental pictures he couldn't avoid involved Fury and Pepper fighting to see who got to kill him first.

Loki's brow furled, but since the name still meant nothing to him, he didn't comment.

"Anyhow, I'm glad that you've been keeping busy, but we might need to rethink the whole publishing thing. Just to be safe." Tony peered at Loki from underneath his bangs. It wasn't that he wanted to stop the guy from publishing. Hell that might be the only way they he ever got any information out of the god.

But.

And it was a big but. The attention might cause things to get ugly in a hurry. And Tony definitely was not a big fan of ugly, especially if it included Pepper and Fury handing him his ass.

While they sat there studying each other, Loki's expression grew colder even as the death grip he had on his knees loosened. "I use the money for my maintenance Stark. I am disinclined to give it up because of someone I don't know.

"I know Comet, I know. But seriously, this guy could cause trouble. And you know, I've seen the figures on your sales, not bad for what you're doing but we're not talking big money here." Tony studied the worn knees of his jeans for a moment before glancing back up at the god, "Seriously buddy, as much as I would hate to give up my chances of getting anymore boxes of cookies from your mom... I have to tell you, you could make a lot more dough just cooperating with me a little bit."

Loki's face darkened, "No, when I write I decide what information to include. You want information I am not about to share. And when I tell you I'm not going to answer a questions you--"

Tony interrupted. "Have I asked you about that lately? No. Not on the table right now. I got it. But that's not what I'm talking about."

Running his hands distractedly through his hair the engineer continued, "I just need you to teach some classes to a few of my engineers." He dropped his hands and gripped the tables edge, "Do that and I'll pay you more than all your books have made so far. Fuck, keep writing them and I'll pay for exclusive access to the information, negotiated yearly even. That way you can make money on them until it's safe to publish them."

Loki's brows knitted in thought, whatever slam he had been about to utter forgotten. "Teach?"

Loki's eyes flashed up to stare into Tony's. "You want me, to teach, clueless Midgardians?"

Tony huffed and shook his head. “No. I want you,” He pointed towards Loki. “To teach highly educated Earthgardians, who just happen to work for me.”

“And yourself Stark?” Loki asked in a rich, rolling, oh so dismissive purr that had Tony shaking his head half in admiration, half in exasperation.

“Dude, there is nothing you can write, that I can’t read and bring myself up to speed on independently.”

He smiled at Loki who had both eyes widened skeptically. “Everything I write, Stark?”

“Well okay, maybe I would need a partner to work out some of the... Spatial coordinates, so to speak. But that is not exactly the subject you get a tutor for.” Tony rolled his eyes and made a face at the god on the bed, “Or if you do, it’s the kind of tutor who wears spike heels and a really fancy bra and panty set.” Loki gave an amused snort at Stark’s imagery.

Stroking his goatee, Tony had to ask, “For my own curiosity... Physics, politics, history, romance AND smut? Seriously?”

Loki smirked and sprawled back on the bed, leaning against the wall. “The last is my most profitable seller Stark. Jarvis has some excellent sales projections on them. We should do quite well with the sequel also.”

“We?”

“In exchange for my assistance, Mister Odinson gives me an agent’s commission sir. Part of which I do reimburse to your accounts for the time I spend working on this project.”

“Jarvis...” Tony was trying very hard to keep his amusement from showing in his tone or features, “Buddy, are you stepping out on me? With Loki?” Tony’s brows knitted together in apparent distress, a pained expression settling on his face. “After all we’ve meant to each other? You’re cheating on me with... Loki?”

“Sir, I must protes--”

“After all we’ve been through,” Tony said despondently throwing his hand up, pressing the back of it to his forehead in his best ‘woe is me’ pose while the other clutched the front of his Nine Inch Nails t-shirt. He held that pose a second, before slyly winking at Loki and then hanging his head sadly.

“And here I always worried about you and Pepper,” Tony intoned mournfully.

“Very amusing sir. Shall I make a copy and send it to the Academy of Motion pictures for you? I’m sure with a little editing it would at least garner you a nomination for Best Live Action Short Film.”

Tony’s head shot up and he glared into one of Jarvis’ corner cameras.

“Short jokes now Jarv? Not only am I crushed that you’re cheating on me with tall, dark and crazy, but now you’re resorting to short jokes? ”

“Perish the thought sir. As you know my happiness rests in your heart.”

“Oooo poetic Jarv--”

“Which is just a little lower than most.”

“Ouch. Good one buddy.”

“I’m glad you appreciate it sir.”

Tony likes it when Jarvis talks smack to him. He honestly does. And he likes it when Jarvis surprises him. Mostly anyway. However Tony does sometimes wonder how far Jarvis would go with all the various independence, sarcasm and initiative protocols that he has tangled in his code.

Usually he wonders this at four in the morning after way too much booze and a nightmare that features Tony having a socket in the back of his skull.

“Are we done Stark?” Loki’s cool voice recalls him to the reason for his visit.

“Not quite. I really did come down here to warn you against publishing anything for a while and talk to you about your chosen subject matter, but I do want you to think about the teaching thing. We can do it in such a way that no one will know that it’s you; Jarvis already has an ID for you. Hell we can do it as a distance class if we decide to maintain deniability as to your actual location.” Tony’s face brightened. “Oooo, or do our own little TED lecture series for all the Stark engineers.”

Loki’s gaze focused on the wall beside Tony as he thought. “I have viewed those,” he said.

Okay. That is totally weird. Space Punk Viking has watched the TED series. Who would have thunk it?

After several minutes, right before Tony was going to say something inane just to break the silence, Loki looked at him.

“Perhaps. Send me your proposal and I will consider it.”

“I told you what--”

“No Stark,” the tone was flat and final. “Send me a proposal. It should detail exactly what you want, exactly what conditions it would occur under and exactly what remuneration I will receive.”

At Tony’s small ‘Oh’ of comprehension, Loki’s mouth tipped into a one sided smile. “And while you are at it, I might, possibly, entertain a separate proposal for exclusivity of the other writings I have close to completion. I’ll send you an overview of each so you can bid accordingly. We wouldn’t want to upset your government unduly.”

Really?!

But hey. Tony can be cool.

“Okay. I can do that. I’ll work something up as soon as possible on the teaching, and get back with you on the exclusivity deal after I get your synopsis on the other books.”

Lifting a lazy brow, Loki waved languidly taking in the general area of his cell. “Take your time Stark, I’m not going anywhere.”

“Funny Dasher, funny. Anyhow...”

Bag of cats was entirely the right way to describe Loki’s mental processes. The guy was just all over the place interest wise. Tony pulled the unused desk chair out and rested his one foot on it, leaning his elbow on that knee.

“What I really want to know, is how the hell a guy who writes political dissertations and papers on advanced physics writes smutty romance novels.”

He watched a full faced smirk flow across Loki’s features. But instead of answering Tony, wicked grin in place and eyes brimming with amusement, the god just sat there a long moment.

“Only one of them had ‘smut’ as you call it.”

“I’ve checked your Mythology rep. I mean, I get that in addition to being smart; you’re kind of like me. A snarky asshole who gets around with reputation for yanking peoples chains. Except maybe you’re more flexible, a lot more flexible, which had to mean that you had a ton of lady friends in Viking-land.”

Tony wonders if he could someday get enough information to do the math on this one. After all the guy has been around for a long, long time. Loki has got to have some serious score numbers.

Idly swinging the foot that wasn’t resting on the desk chair Tony raised an eyebrow, a knowing smirk playing on his lips. “I don’t pry of course, but everyone you’ve seen at the tower seemed pretty happy as they left.”

While he didn’t answer, Loki gifted Tony with possibly the filthiest smile the playboy has ever seen on the face of a man.

“But seriously Reindeer Games, I do it, I don’t write about it.”

“It’s not that difficult really Stark, I merely write about what I know. I have almost a thousand years of knowledge to use as a base for my writing. I could easily do a book on hand to hand defense, knife play, poisons or the aesthetics of flower garden cultivation.”

Tony wrinkled his face in a skeptical frown at that last one.

“Oh yes. You spend a thousand plus years listening to your mother discuss her garden and you will be amazed at what you learn, whether you want to or not.”

Rolling his shoulders a bit against the hard wall he was leaning on, Loki lowered one knee parallel to the bed, tucking that foot behind his other. “As for the romances Stark it was a sensible choice from a financial standpoint. I could see that they sold easiest of all for a new writer if they had any kind of a plot and the author had good descriptive and narrative skills. The first was easy, I have been alive for centuries; I know many stories that could be adapted for my plots. The second even easier as I am noted for my communication skills.”

“And the kinky sex part?”

Loki shook his head and huffed, “Despite what your internet would have you believe, your world did not invent ‘kinky sex’ if that is what you are asking Stark. And the Norns know I have had enough encounters to use as a base for that. While the Asgardian’s favor perhaps more traditional... activities, the Vanir are much more inventive.”

He paused as possibly hundreds of memories brushed briefly across his consciousness bringing both a smile and a bit of rising color to his expression. “As for Álfheimr, realm of the Elves,” Loki paused again, sighing. His smile widening he looked up with a raised brow and a real sparkle in his eyes, “By the Nine Stark, there is nothing in all the realms better than being able to lure an Elf to your bed.” I am an acclaimed wordsmith, and I tell you I cannot do them justice when it comes to their appetites and skills.”

“Really?” Tony breathed, his imagination running wild at what sort of activities could bring an expression like that to Loki’s face.

“Oh yes Stark, sexuality is an art form there, silky skin, soft yielding lips, delicate touches that excite, all of that and so much more. No other realm on Yggdrasil's branches knows how to please and be pleased better than the light elves.”

Tony and Loki were both lost in their private thoughts for a few moments.

“Well I guess it was a good thing for you that Earth females are into getting turned on by stories like that.”

“Oh? Midgardian men are not?” Loki looked skeptical.

Tony waved a hand dismissively in the air. Like a guy is going to wade through a whole book to get his rocks off.

Seriously not going to happen.

“Naw. Normal guys don’t get off on stuff like that. We’re too visual really.”

“Too visual?” The god looked somewhat miffed at his work being dismissed. “I am a wordsmith; I assure you that using words to create a vision is what I do. When I describe something a picture is not necessary. And I do it well enough for both sexes to be affected by it.”

“Whatever man.” Tony shrugged. “I’m just saying guys here aren’t into that descriptive crap.”

“Stark, I assure you that it is not ‘crap’. In both males and females, my words can evoke a mood that involves the senses and provokes a physical response without using anything as crude as pictures.”

Loki looked thoughtful for a moment, “Although it is possible for one story to suffice for both, stories can be crafted for one gender or the other for maximum effect.”

Tony started to roll his eyes but stopped when he saw how aggravated Loki had become. “Look, maybe in fairy land where they don’t have the right men’s magazines that works, but Earthgardian males don’t get into descriptive porn. We like pictures.”

“Ah. Well.”

Loki allowed his head to fall backwards, exposing the column of his long neck, with the chiseled notches highlighted and shadowed as if carved by a master sculptor. He tilted his head slightly sideways peering at Tony. His mischievous green eyes veiled by the lashes of his half-closed eyelids, dark smoky lashes that draw attention to the god’s finely formed cheek bones.

“My words merely tell what my body feels.” Loki’s voice flowed over Tony like chocolate silk, “It’s like a dance Anthony Stark, one that I have to describe to be sure that you understand the depth of what I feel. My body moving towards yours, feeling the pull of attraction, displaying everything I have in order to let you know how I feel about you. How my pulse races when you are near. I want you to know how you affect me. I crave the warmth of your skin as I breathe you in, spice and earth and the dangerous tang of metal because of who you are. And I tell you now there is nobody alive who can make me feel the way you do.”

Dark green eyes locked on to Tony’s, “There is nothing in the all the nine realms that I want more than for you hold me down and fasten your teeth on my throat... Dominating me as I sigh into your

hair, the heat from your body making me burn with longing, my skin shivering with your every touch..." Loki's voice caught, causing Tony's own breath to hitch.

In his mind's eye the playboy saw the god squirming beneath him, wrists pinned above his head as Tony pressed his body against the god's flawless alabaster skin. The god arching up into him as he pressed lips and teeth against that perfectly formed jaw right where it joins Loki's white throat, moving down to the god's sculpted shoulder blades, pulling back only to watch as evidence of Tony's domination blooms. Marking the god as his and only his...

"I would do anything; promise anything, to bury my fingers in your hair, my arm around your waist so that every inch of my naked skin is pressed against you. I writhe in frustration because you won't let me stroke you in all the places I ache to touch you. Can you can feel how I flush with desire when you nip below my ear before you finally press my head against your shoulder, growling in my ear that I belong only to Tony Stark and that you will never let anyone else take what is yours."

Tony could feel himself starting to get warm, sweat starting to form on his temples. Oh yeah, I could be alright with all of that, he thinks.

"Can you hear how my breathing changes when you tell me that?"

He really needed to get back to his lab.

Now.

"But because you secretly long for it, some days I take you," the god's whisper was satin flowing across overly sensitive skin; unconsciously Tony leaned forward not wanting to miss a word that was being said. The raw emotion in the god's voice alone was causing heat to pool in strange places of Tony's body.

"Running my fingertips over every inch of your skin, mapping all the places that make you gasp or shudder with desire. Kissing, licking and biting the tender areas of your body until you can't stand it a moment longer. I love listening to you cry out, helpless as I stroke down the sides of your legs and then up the fronts of your thighs, causing your eyes to flutter shut and your breath to hitch as I cruelly bypass your quivering erection. Stroking your taut belly and teasing you by dipping down and cupping you in a firm controlling grip, but never actually giving you the touch you are begging for. Can you tell how excited I get from the soft cries you make, can you smell my desire, can you see how badly I want you as I lose myself in your beautiful auburn eyes and taste every inch of your skin, while you whine desperately and beg me to finally take you?"

Tony really wouldn't want to know how long he sat there mesmerized after Loki's voice trailed off. He was guessing it was more than a moment or two by the way the god's lips were pressed in a thin line with little crinkles of amusement at the corners. It is a sure bet that the smug git knows that Tony is contemplating a shower right now. Tony just hasn't decided which kind. Cold and bracing or warm and overly soapy?

"And that Stark, is what I can do without getting too involved. Shall I continue but add all the explicit details I've left out? Should I tell you what I would do until you were covered in sweat and exhaustion? What I would do until your lips were begging me to fill you with every sobbing breath you took?"

Tony just blinked at him in shock. Loki gave a low, throaty chuckle that caused a painful groin tightening shudder to run through Tony's body.

The bastard god's lips curled like a Cheshire cat as he tipped his head to the side and regarded Tony with a sidelong glance. "So Anthony Stark, from my words alone, without a picture to excite you, can you imagine yourself in that body, that situation--"

"What the fuck is this all about? Tony asked hoarsely. "Does that mean you've imagined this?"

Something that, amazingly enough, Tony could be totally okay with. This was definitely a complete one-eighty from how he felt when the god had first arrived. It isn't like Tony hasn't had a few thoughts along these lines over the last few months, usually in the shower, but once at the tail end of a dream...

The billionaire swallowed hard, "With me?"

That last sentence did not just squeak out of Tony like he was some kind of kid whose voice hadn't settled yet.

Did it?

Loki arched an amused dark brow at Tony. The god's green eyes glittering with laughter before he hooded them, his thick lashes unsuccessfully hiding the mischievous lights dancing within them. "What do you think Stark?" he asked lazily. "Do you still think someone still needs to draw you a picture?"

Tony was back up in his lab before he realized that he had left without saying another word.

"Jarvis," he said hoarsely, "Make sure the guest floor is secure."

"Very good sir."

He paced back and forth a moment, trying to decide which work bench to settle at.

"Jarvis are all the other books Loki wrote in the same folder as the science books?"

"Yes sir."

"Good, fine."

He sat at his second workbench, staring at the HUD capable sunglasses he had been holding for twenty minutes, concentration shot, before giving up and rolling over to his desk.

Much later Tony put down his tablet and thought that rather than Emily Brontë, the god might instead be channeling that Malkavia Thirty author that Pepper's secretaries and female assistants were always going on about.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the very lovely comments.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies and Mima Mai. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Uninvited Visitor

Chapter Summary

Loki gets company... And they forgot to call ahead.

***** **A passing Icelander** *wave hands* Thank you so much for your help. If you would be so kind as to give me the translations for - 'Son of a diseased whore' and 'You only think you know what pain is you honorless swine' I would be forever grateful. :D

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

Our story so far for those of you just tuning in... Tony and Frigga make the deal, bribes are offered and accepted, Pepper is not happy, neither apparently is Odin. Loki's physical injuries are cured but his mental issues are causing new ones. Tony is meh, Bruce and Pepper get excited about them. Oh and Loki makes a break for freedom and does a little freefall, Tony is very much not amused. Loki takes issue with Tony's accounting practices and starts his own prison work shop. Mom saves money, but Tony can't get any new material. The Loki Exercise channel is a big hit... at least with Tony. Fury comes to visit. He wants to know who is behind publishing company with ties to Stark Industries. Fury is curious about the political, scientific and historical writing. The bridge crew of the HeliCarrier just want to know when the sequel to a certain smut filled bodice ripper will be released. Phil is not amused. After much delay Tony goes to talk to Loki and offers him a teaching position and then gets freaked out by a demonstration of exactly how easily Loki is able to write racy material.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 25 – Uninvited Visitor

After loading various washers with towels for the cafeteria, executive dining room and the lab that he services, it doesn't take too long for Loki to empty the other bins and spot treat any stains that he finds. He can usually get that done by the time the first loads are ready for the dryer. After the newly freed washers are reloaded with tablecloths and napkins or lab coats, he normally has between a good half an hour to forty-five minutes of free time.

Normally he uses this time to check his emails, not that he can actually reply to anything himself. Most of them are just email alerts that he has signed up for, concerning various topics, or rather that Jarvis has signed up for on his behalf. And then there are requests for direction or clarification

from Jarvis on those items that do require an answer. Communication that Jarvis handles since Loki is only allowed information inflow.

However today's emails include two from Stark, who he hasn't seen in three days.

While it was definitely not the smartest thing he has done in recent memory, which is another sore subject for sure but Loki doesn't regret seizing the opportunity to unsettle the man. It was the first real chance that he'd had to directly influence the mortal since he'd arrived. His other attempts have of necessity been indirect attempts. While he has had some success affecting changes in his circumstances using Ms. Potts and occasionally Jarvis, the end results are much harder to control when direct involvement can't be used.

But he'd definitely had more direct control of Stark during his 'Story Time' demonstration. Of course that sort of manipulation always had the chance of backfiring in a catastrophic way. However Loki thought he knew enough about Stark to do it safely and so far it seems that the event had played out exactly as Loki had hoped.

It had been a spur of the moment decision, but the evidence suggested that he had accomplished his goal of making Stark acutely uncomfortable with certain thoughts as they pertain to Loki.

Perhaps it was poor repayment for the man's recent 'gifts', but lately there had also been enough looks and comments from Stark to make Loki wary. Stark drank in excess, was used to getting what he wanted regardless of the consequences and did not, as far as Loki could see, exhibit very much impulse control. As a sequestered prisoner Loki could be in a lot of danger should Stark develop... an unhealthy obsession.

Strange to think that those same traits could also work to his advantage. There was no way that Asgard would ever approve of even the more modest of the freedoms that Stark allowed his prisoner, such as access to the mortal equivalent of the Well of Information and the ability to purchase various comforts. Asgard most certainly would not support a prisoner being allowed an occasional companion, alcohol or frequent dinner and movie nights like a normal being instead of a condemned criminal.

Loki's thoughts stuttered to a stop thinking about the All Father's reaction to the extra privileges he was allowed. While mother was obviously the one who had made the arrangements, surely Odin received regular reports from Heimdall?

While he wouldn't say that he was their favorite person, he had always gotten along with Hugin and Munin and does wonder why he hasn't caught one glimpse of them outside his windows in all the time he has been on Midgard. That is more than passing strange, although unless something is warding, Odin can always see what he wants when sitting upon Hlidskjalf.

Overall it had been an unusually quiet day today. Instead of listening to lectures to either learn something new or figure out how woefully behind the mortals are on various topics, Loki had been concentrating on the teaching contract that Stark had sent him. For the most part it was a good deal, a really good deal. But there is always room for improvement if you knew where to look, even where good deals were concerned.

Of course he needs to make sure that dealing with Stark now doesn't cause him any problems in the future. He definitely needs to make sure that the information he bargains with is not something that will imperil Asgard or incur Odin's wrath. So Loki has had a lot to think about today.

"I'm finished Jarvis," Loki calls out, readying the rolling shelves and racks to push them out of the laundry room and over to the elevator for pickup.

“Very good Mister Odinson,” Jarvis said unlocking the door and sliding it open for him. “Today’s cafeteria specials are Blackened Tilapia, if you’ll recall that is a fish dish or Chicken Fried Steak. Oh and you will be glad to hear that today, they also have the Pistachio Jell-O Soufflé you like.”

While neither choice really appealed to him, Loki doesn’t often pass up the hot lunch choices as he gets tired of the cold foods and sandwiches that make up his morning, evening and weekend meals.

“The fish please Jarvis, and I would like two of the pistachio desserts if you please.” Loki requested as he positioned the first laundry shelf by the elevator for pickup.

“I’ll order it now sir.”

“Thank you Jarvi-oof!”

The first blow was a kick to the small of his back, causing him to fly forward, but before his attacker could follow up, Loki rolled forward, pivoting on one hand to quickly change the direction of his movement, going off to the side and into a high double cartwheel to open up some room between him and his assailant.

Female assailant.

The short woman with red hair had already closed the distance that he had gained. Before she could get any closer, Loki swung up with one leg from the backwards crouch he had landed in, using his opposite arm to launch himself off the floor giving him just that much more force and reach. The speed of the attack was such that the woman barely managed to sway backwards to avoid the blow that otherwise would have connected hard with the side of her head.

Staying in constant motion, Loki swung his whole body low avoiding the doubled fists swinging down towards him. Dancing to one side Loki evaded a round house kick before launching a low sweep, trying unsuccessfully to kick the woman’s legs out from under her as she spun away from him.

She was very good.

However, he thought he might be better.

Taking advantage of the distance between them the red head ran towards Loki, kicking up in the air wrapping her thighs around his neck and spinning around him in a move that was obviously designed to knock him to the ground.

Which it did, after all she had all the momentum on her side. But Loki used her momentum against her when he wrapped his arms and hands tightly around her legs, locking her in place. He knew they were going to fall after going into the spin. She didn’t until she tried to release. Loki twisted so that she was under him when they hit the floor. Elbowing her hard in the stomach allowed him to break free of her hold and roll off of her briefly.

Before she could regain her balance Loki did a back roll kneeing her solidly in the side, feeling her ribs give slightly before completing the roll and springing backwards to line up for the next strike. Before he could flow into his next move the leather clad woman tossed two black biscuit shaped things towards his feet. Loki ended up doing an incredibly ungraceful back flip to get away as small sparks of lighting crackled where he had been standing not a moment earlier.

“Agent Romanoff! You must stop! Sir will be down to explain everything to you in a moment!” shouted a distressed Jarvis.

Loki didn't know who this woman was, but apparently Jarvis did.

She had used the time it took him to retreat from her lighting generators to pull out two small pistols. While not a common weapon on other realms, Loki was not unfamiliar with the ones that imported from outside Yggdrasil's branches that fired energy beams. He knew from watching mortal entertainment and discussions with Stark that the ones on Midgard normally fired solid projectiles.

Fortunately Loki was just a bit faster than she was; perhaps because he was not in pain from a cracked rib or two. Diving behind the rolling stainless steel shelf full of towels that he had parked near the elevator he heard the several pings of metal before the woman shouted at him.

"Loki! Down on the floor or I swear I'll shoot you."

"You swear you'll shoot me? You've already shot at me! Why are you attacking me?!" Loki yelled taking cover behind the shelf with the elevator structure at his back.

"Who are you?!" He shouted, moving the shelf at a slight angle so he could keep the solid metal back protecting him while he shifted a pile of towels to peer through the metal slats that made up the sides of the container. The woman was several yards away holding her pistols straight out in front of her.

Loki heard the elevator doors open, looking behind him he saw that it was not the elevator he normally used to go to Stark's floor or load laundry in front of; rather it was the further of the two sets of doors that he had never seen anyone use.

An obvious invitation to retreat if ever Loki had seen one.

"You know quite well who--"

An ear piercing siren drowned out whatever else the woman was going to say, causing her to spring forward. Loki knew he wouldn't be able to get himself and his protective covering to the open elevator before she got to him. Hoping he timed it right, Loki grabbed the center shelf and heaved upwards.

While he didn't manage to pin the woman underneath it like he was hoping, the large metal cart did knock her down, causing one of her guns to go flying. Springing up onto the cart, Loki launched himself at the woman catching her arm as she scrambled to get up, he forced her arm up as he slammed her backwards, pinning her to the polished concrete floor.

Loki struggled, wondering what in the Nine Realms he had done to incite the wrath of this woman. He tried to keep her from squirming out from under him while not letting go of the hand holding the pistol. Her forearm tried to slam up against his throat, while he was able to move out of her way enough that most of the force was lost, it still hurt.

It hurt a lot.

Coughing, he tried immobilizing her by wrapping his other arm around her, pinning her other arm to her torso and by tangling his legs in hers so her ability to strike him with her knees or kick him was restricted. She was screaming at him, he saw her mouth moving, but all he could hear was the wall of sound from the siren that Jarvis was blasting through all of his speakers.

Due to the various strikes and shifts the woman attempted and his answering responses, they ended up rolling half way across his exercise area before Loki managed to break her grip on the pistol. But before he could grab it the woman wrenched him away. He thought about letting go of her and

trying to retrieve it, but now that she no longer had the firearm, she tightened her grip on him so that he couldn't get the gun either.

Loki knew numerous ways that he could have broken free, but the most effective ones were killing blows. He was pretty sure he could get enough manoeuvring space to perform one, but again he was hesitant to actually kill or seriously injure the woman since he didn't know who her associates were. If she could get to him, so might they. He needed to see if she was someone important. He didn't want to kill her and find himself embroiled in a vendetta with mortals he didn't even know.

Loki had taken numerous blows before they fetched up against one of the window walls enabling him to pretty much immobilize the woman.

Lifting his head, Loki shouted, trying to get Jarvis to turn off that damn noise when the wench bit him, right below his shoulder in the fleshy part where the under arm meets the chest.

He screamed, unheard over all of the other noise and general commotion, as she dug her teeth deeper apparently trying to bite a chunk out of his flesh.

Loki snaked his hand up to the side of her head balling his fist in her short red hair and used his grip to slam her head into the wall.

She didn't let go as he did it, the pain from her biting his mortal body and having his skin stretched was much worse than he thought it should be. It felt like she was trying to chew a large piece out of his pectoralis muscle if the way her jaw repeatedly tighten and ground, refusing to release him was any indication. After the first two strikes of her head to the wall didn't persuade her to let go, Loki followed to lessen the tug on his abused skin and just body slammed her head against the wall repeatedly until her grip loosened.

It seemed that no sooner than the deranged mortal loosened her grip on him, Jarvis cut the siren.

After several minutes of ear bleeding noise, his ears still rang from the abuse. But eventually he could hear Jarvis demanding that he gag the woman and then secure her so she couldn't get a way. The woman, Romanoff Jarvis had called her, was not unconscious, but she was moving feebly, her eyes blinking, apparently unable to focus.

While he did wonder about Jarvis' order of responses, in the end he did as requested, if only to because otherwise Jarvis was going to sound that Norn's be damned siren again. And that Loki could not abide to, especially since his ears were still ringing from the first time.

Fortunately, the red head put up only minor resistance to being secured making that much easier. Unfortunately this meant Loki couldn't slam her head against the wall a few more times in retaliation for the bite that was currently throbbing and bleeding all over his chest.

OoooO

"Fuck. How in the hell did she get in there? How the fuck did she even know where to go? Jarvis, please tell me she hasn't killed him." Tony was suiting up fast. Or at least as fast as the slower workshop rig could arm him. He had thought about using one of his self-assembly suits, but they sacrificed weapon versatility for the self-assembly mechanisms. And if he was going to have to battle in his own building, he wanted all the choices he could get, which would minimize damage as much as possible.

"You are in luck sir. Mister Odinson seems to be holding his own so far."

"Well yay for us then."

“Indeed sir, although I am at a loss as to understand why Agent Romanoff hasn’t used any weapons yet.”

“Jarvis, let us not look gift assassins in the mouth.”

“We shall restrain ourselves of course sir.”

Tony twisted his head a bit to give the rig more room to finish and then sort of shook the suit into final position. It really didn’t do anything to make the suit more seated, but it did allow his clothes to settle, hopefully eliminating some of the chaffing that was inevitable when he was not wearing one of his actual under suit unitards. Tony thought he looked flat ridiculous in the whisper thin, skintight unitards, but he had to admit that his tender bits weren’t as sore when he wore one. So he was a bit bummed that he didn’t have time to change into one now.

Please don’t let it be necessary to be in this damn thing too long, Tony prayed to whatever Techno-friendly deity that might be listening. He knew if he stayed in the suit anytime at all this afternoon he’d be rubbed sore in a dozen delicate and or intimate places.

Seriously not fun.

“You got me a clear elevator shaft yet?” After that last debacle in the stair well, Tony had given some thought to getting to other floors in his building that did not involve blowing holes in any walls or windows.

“Yes sir, although I will keep the doors closed until you get there, I already have your private elevator in route in case Mr. Odinson can work his way over to the elevator shaft.”

“Good idea Jarv,” Tony said lowering his visor and heading out of the lab towards doors on the elevator bank that rarely opened this high up. “We sure don’t want him diving into the wrong open set of doors only to discover that there isn’t a car waiting there.”

“Indeed sir.”

Tony looked down as the doors opened, making a mental review of maneuvers to avoid so as not to damage anything.

“Okay buddy, give me some feed and I’ll head down there to see if I can’t get the Menace of New York and the Bitch Queen to calm their shit down.”

Tony took an almost dainty hop into the shaft, not wanting to use his thrusters while on a finished floor surface. He would like to think that the reason his initial drop wasn’t more graceful was because he was suddenly distracted by the feed Jarvis was sending him from the ‘special guest’ level.

“Jarvis, buddy, please, please, please tell me that you got some other good angles on this.” Tony was in love. While he still held a bit of a grudge with Prince Wacko for throwing him out the window, he had to admit he was getting more excited at seeing Romanoff have her ass handed to her.

Not that he wished the woman any injuries or anything. Except perhaps a small bone or two, maybe a few torn muscles... Okay contusions and bruises, but certainly nothing major... Even if he was surprised...

No.

“Of course sir, four different cameras,” His AI informs him smugly. Romanoff is possibly not Jarvis’ favorite person, especially considering how many times she has threatened to kill Tony. Jarvis seems to take that kind of personally.

Hell no. Tony is not surprised, Tony is fucking delighted. He was delighted that the leather clad agent that caused him so much trouble by breaking into his personal building on multiple occasions was literally getting her ass handed to her. The agent who caused him so much pain every time that Tony was forced to join in a team sparring lesson was being totally schooled. Gift wrapped. And on film. Did it get any better than this?

Oh wait it does, Tony thought gleefully to himself, multiple angles! He could get Jarvis to make a compilation tape! With a sound track!

Fuck, he was almost giddy with joy as he continued his controlled fall down the shaft.

“Well thank heaven for that-- Shit!”

Tony pushed away from the mechanical wall that he had drifted too close to.

“Sir!”

“Fuck. She had to pull out the damn guns didn’t she?” Tony was so totally pissed with SHIELD and all their shit. Just when he thought things were going smooth with them pulled stuff like this. After all they could have simply asked him if he was keeping a Norse god prisoner.

Okay, so maybe Fury thought he wouldn’t be honest... but still they could have at least given him the chance to lie and then try this crap. That would have been fair. If they had done it that way Tony wouldn’t have had a bitch. Or at least not that much of one. And Tony totally did not count Fury’s little visit a few weeks ago. SHIELD wanted to know about who was writing those books that they were so worked up about and technically Tony hadn’t known. At least not at first... So it wasn’t really like he would lie to them if they just came flat out and asked do you have an insane Norse god hiding in your tower.

So okay maybe he would have, but it would have been a much smaller lie for sure.

Ouch!

“That has got to hurt.”

“I would imagine it does,” Jarvis agreed sounding more than a little pleased.

Okay, so maybe Tony can muster a little sympathy for the widow. Jarvis however sounded far to pleased.

But that was perfectly understandable with as many times as Natasha has tried to mess with Jarvis.

“Open the doors please Jarvis.” Bobbing and trying to stay steady in the dark elevator shaft Tony decided to really, really think about some sort of open atrium design if he ever builds another tower. Definitely wider than this damn elevator shaft.

“Jarvis, do you think there is any way we can retro-fit an atrium on this building?”

“I would have to look into it sir. If you will wait one minute sir, I will open the doors.”

“Also sir, I have taken the liberty of warning Mister Odinson that you are here and asking him not

to panic because you are in your suit.” Jarvis calmly informed him as the elevator doors slid open.

Ooo excellent save for Jarvis, Loki almost certainly did not have positive thoughts about the suit.

“Thanks buddy that’s all we need is him freaking.” Since he didn’t need the head up display Tony lifted his visor as he exited the elevator shaft. Loki stopped just as he exited the laundry room when Tony gingerly maneuvered onto the floor, trying not to get tangled up in all the half-folded towels scattered all over the place.

“Well come on sport, let me see your handy work,” Tony told the slit eyed god who was watching him warily.

“Hey Tasha!” Tony wrinkled his nose and smiled down at the trussed up assassin who was watching him through narrowed bleary eyes.

“You know this woman?” Loki asked suspiciously, following Tony’s ‘come on’ wave, but keeping a cautious distance from both of them.

“Well. Yeah,” the billionaire shrugged, with an exaggerated frown that just missed being a pout. “I mean not biblically or anything, but yeah.”

Natasha lifted her head, widened her eyes a bit in a message of some sort and screamed into her gag for a few moments, before falling silent and tiredly allowing her head to lean back to the floor.

She is most likely really pissed, he thought. Not that Tony really gave a shit.

Tony peered at the blood oozing down the side of Loki’s chest. “You okay there Rudolf?”

“I think I will live Stark,” the god answered acidly, his hand which had ghosted up near the wound when Tony asked about it being firmly lowed and shoved in his pants pocket.

Nodding and not wanting to make more of a fuss about it at the present time, Tony cocked his head towards the assassin. “Heck of a pounding you gave her there, hey?”

“I don’t believe I permanently damaged her Stark,” Irritation and justification equally tinting both Loki’s tone and features. “I didn’t want to have to do her anymore damage.” The god winced, “But neither did I want her to do anymore to me. So I incapacitated her as gently as I could. It was either this or stomping on the front of one of her kneecaps and perhaps breaking an elbow.”

The assassin glowered at the god, growling into her gag.

“So hey. Then it looks like you made the right choice. Thanks. But I do have one question Slick.”

Loki gave Tony one of the god’s patented looks of ‘very limited patience’ before sighing and running an impatient hand through his fine black hair.

“Which is?” Loki asked his voice and countenance making it plain that he was completely disinterested in whatever Tony’s foolish question might be.

“Ummm... Yeah. Much better choice there. No broken bones, so thanks... But...” Tony slid his eyes sideways trying to hide the smile twitching on each end of his lips. “Lokemiester, why is Natasha almost naked?”

Thank you all so much for the very lovely comments.

If you are not a comment kind of person, please Kudo and Fav it helps the placement ratings of this story.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies and Mima Mai. Many, many thanks for your assistance ladies.

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Natasha Down

Chapter Summary

Why is Natasha almost naked? Inquiring minds want to know.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, she decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 197,000 words already written. Not all polished and pretty mind you, but written. :)

Commissioned Art by LadyMintLeaf <http://ladymintleaf.deviantart.com/>

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 26 – Natasha Down

This obviously was not the question that the mischief maker had been expecting to hear. A troubled look flashed over his face, but was gone in an instant. "I restrained her. Which Jarvis asked me to do," he said defensively.

"Okay, I can see that. But did you have to strip her almost naked to do it?"

Tony couldn't help it. The guffaw he wanted to just let loose semi-leaked into his voice, causing the Widow to look even more murderous than she had a moment earlier. He was soooooo glad that Jarvis's cameras on this floor were high-def. This was going to make a kick-ass, pun achieved thank you very much, video clip.

"What exactly would you have me use Stark?" Loki flung out an agitated hand in the general direction of the laundry room and elevator. "Any of the laundry was too far away to retrieve while restraining the wretched woman. Pardon me if I declined to use my own pants instead of hers to bind her ankles. It's not like I had access to any rope."

"Okay, I can see that, but normally we don't strip guests in my tower. Unless they're consenting that is, but as you know that's another story that we need to keep just between ourselves. 'Kay?"

"Well I certainly could have used her breast binder... Brassier... Agggh... Bra to tie her wrists, keeping the shirt in reserve for the gag, but I thought that contributing my own tank top was perhaps the more gentlemanly thing to do."

Loki's voice was sliding up in both volume and pitch. "Besides it was softer and tied better. But

please do correct me if I erred in my assessment. I certainly wouldn't want to inconvenience any other attackers who appear out of nowhere threatening me with deadly weapons trying to kill me!" He almost screamed.

Loki was flushed and breathing a bit raggedly. Obviously experiencing some sort of post-fight shakes, the engineer thought.

Tony met the challenging green eyes with his own stare, taking pains to keep his face and voice calm, not wanting to escalate the situation.

"Could we just dial down the anger a couple of dozen notches? Not that it isn't perfectly justified, mind you."

The god visibly tried to relax, uncurling his clenched fists, irritably shaking his head before breathing out and allowing his posture to be a bit less rigid.

"Thanks. Oh and the snark too? Just a bit... Perhaps?"

Noticeably taking hold of his temper, Loki gave him a stiff nod.

"Great. Wonderful. Thanks so much. Oh and by the way, where are they?"

Loki presented Tony with a sphinx-like expression.

After a few moments of silence, Jarvis chimed in. "I had Mister Odinson drop Agent Romanoff's guns into one of the small washers and turn it on. Then I locked the laundry room sir."

"Oh. Very good. Excellent job as always Jarvis."

"Thank you sir, I continuously bask in the sunshine of your approval." Intoned the AI with an unmistakable electronic roll of his eyes. "However, I must inform you that one of Agent Romanoff's knives is in Mister Odinson's left sock and I couldn't see what he did with the other."

Loki glanced up at the ceiling, his regal blank Egyptian look overwritten for a scant instant with... Disbelief and betrayal?

Okay what was that all about?

"Seriously Reindeer Games? Like Jarvis was going to miss that? Do me a favor and toss them over towards the laundry room will you?"

Tony ignored the poisoned look flicked his way before Loki bent down to get the knife at his ankle.

"Left handed please." Not that Tony knew if that little precaution would even help.

That didn't even earn him a dirty look, just a disagreeable 'humf' as Loki stood up with the knife in his left hand and fired it hard at the laundry room wall where it shattered against the ballistic tempered glass. Romanoff screamed against her gag.

Without even gracing the red head with a look, Loki retrieved the second knife. It was smaller, barely as big as his palm and had been in the god's right pants pocket, but he transferred it to his left hand the moment it was clear of the material. He threw and shattered that one in the same manner as the first.

This provoked not only a muffled scream from Natasha, but also a spirited attempt by the scantily

clad red head to get up. Obviously wanting to head butt the ex-deity into a bloody lump.

“Lemme guess? Custom ceramic knives?” Tony inquired looking down at the woman and ignoring the amused spiteful huff coming from the trickster.

They spent a minute regarding, or in Loki’s case clearly ‘admiring’, the shards of ruined knife scattered by the laundry room wall before Tony bent down and hauled Natasha up as gently as his suited hands could. She swayed a bit. Possibly from residual dizziness of the blows she had taken to her head or perhaps from the way her ankles were bound. Or hell, it could have been a mixture of both.

“Sir, if I might make a suggestion. I really think you need to take Ms. Romanoff upstairs before you untie her.” Jarvis advised.

Having taken a look at the tightly knotted shirt securing her hands Tony agreed that maybe gauntlets were not quite what he needed to get her loose. Hindsight being the bitch that she was, it occurred to him that he should have had Loki just set the knives on the floor.

His gauntlet plucked at the knot on the gag when Jarvis interrupted him.

“The gag also sir?” Jarvis asked in a tone used by every long suffering parent in the world when their child is acting more brain dead than usual. The AI, clearly annoyed at the lack of forethought Tony was exhibiting today continued, “And might it not be a good idea to ask Mister Odinson to return to his room until you sort this out and the weapons and knife parts are secure?”

Tony lowered his head restraining the impulse to grimace or roll his eyes up at Jarvis. Because of course Jarvis was once again right.

Okay, so maybe he wasn’t firing on all cylinders today... But honestly who would in this type of situation? Who else but Tony ‘fucking’ Stark gets himself into crap like this?

“Good idea Jarv,” he agreed making sure to keep the pissy tone out of his voice. “Rudolf, could you go read or something in your room until we get this straightened out?” He steadied Natasha while widening his eyes in inquiry at the sour look the god was throwing his way.

“In case you have forgotten, I am the one who cleans this floor. Plus I have several loads of laundry that need to be redone before the day is over.”

“Room. Please. Now.” Tony ground out, trying not to yell at the god in front of Natasha.

Neither one of them moved. Tony did notice the tightening of skin along Loki’s jaw. “Look, you need to go clean up before you can touch any of this stuff anyhow. Go take a shower; I’ll have Jarvis send you down some antiseptic and bandages to take care of that... bite?”

All three of them looked at the raw chewed area of Loki’s chest.

Why me? Tony thought irritated at his obviously fucked up karma and hoping that the mess on Flawed Design’s chest didn’t need stitches because he was totally not up to doing needle point on his psychopathic Asgardian god.

“What the hell Red, did you miss lunch or something. I hope you’ve had all your shots or I am turning you in to animal control.” Loki started to say something, but Tony cut him off, “Anyhow, that needs taking care of now. Let me get her straightened out and then we’ll see if you need a doctor or tetanus shot or something.”

Flexing and clenching his hands down at his side, Loki just stood there. Shaking his head and looking into one of Jarvis' cameras the engineer said, "I might need some help here in a minute Jarv."

Loki flashed a look in the same direction before brown eyes locked on green.

"Please. I would really, really, really appreciate it if you didn't make this more difficult than it has to be."

"Fine!" Loki spat at him, but Loki's '*Death by Laser*' look was reserved for the growling Natasha. Loki didn't quite pout and stomp to his room exactly like a five year old being sent to time out.

But it was close.

Shaking his head in exasperation and rolling his eyes to the heavens for patience, Tony made sure he turned enough to keep the angry god in his sight. As Loki cleared the first set of doors and they began to close, Tony called out to him. "Thanks buddy. I appreciate it."

He could see the god pause and almost turn but then he looked up, obviously being addressed by Jarvis. Without even turning his head to look back at Tony, Loki threw him the finger.

Which was actually pretty funny coming from a guy who spoke like Shakespeare half the time. And if you thought about it, a fine testament to the power that cinema had in teaching social nuances.

Once the second set of door closed, Loki stood at the glass wall in that stupid military review pose he did so often. Shoulders impossibly square, hands clasped behind his back, chin elevated looking down his nose at the lowly source of his current aggravation.

The volume of Natasha's growling increased.

Jeesh. Shaking his head and again looking to heaven for strength, Tony turned the assassin to face him and popped her over his left shoulder. Unable to hear her muffled screaming due to the soundproof cell, her outraged struggle could be clearly seen by the incarcerated god. Loki smiled acidly, obviously pleased at Natasha's plight as Tony gave him a thumbs up and bounced his shoulder at bit to settle his partially clothed burden better.

"Red you need to stay still or I might just drop your ass." Tony admonished sternly, pausing a moment as he wrapped her legs in a firm grip before continuing in a lighter more jovial tone.

"And may I say... Having seen it up close and personal... it is not a bad ass at all. Leg lifts? Squats? I have no clue what you're doing, but it is working just fine girlfriend. Oh, and I like the bra and panty set. Very 'I can kill you with my thighs' chic.

He hastily clutched at the enraged agent before she could slide off his shoulder. Loki was now chuckling evilly behind his sound proof walls. Tony waved to him and called. "Jarvis, frost me some walls and send the bot down here to get the weapons. Tell Dummy that he can help pick up some of this shit if he promises not to break anything.



OoooO

Tony and the occasionally struggling Natasha took the elevator up to the party floor. As gently as he could, Tony set the red head down on the couch. He figured the coatings that repelled food and wine stains should work equally well for the odd smears of blood Natasha had from her impromptu chomping on Loki. This particular couch also had two more attributes that made it his choice for parking that fine ass.

“It’s a damn shame Pep and I aren’t still a couple or I would totally be asking you where you bought that set.” Shaking off his right gauntlet and turning slightly so she couldn’t see what he was doing, Tony popped a storage container on the thigh of his suit and bent down. It only took a moment for him to hook one end of the hand cuffs around the metal staple like leg of the sofa and capture Natasha’s bound legs. Tony pushed the improvised denim jean binding twisted around them up a bit and attached the other end of the cuff to her left ankle.

As soon as the metal touched her, Natasha tried to jerk away from Tony. Not that she could when he was holding her with a powered gauntlet. But hey, points for trying he supposed.

Of course all she really accomplished was another big bruise, but Tony did understand that a girl had to do what a girl had to do.

Even if it's stupid.

Tony patted her thigh with his un-gloved hand, "Now, you sit tight and let me go find some scissors to cut you loose. Okay?" He started backing out of the room, holding his hands up like he was trying to train a particularly rambunctious puppy not to follow him.

"Be a good girl and I'll be right back and then we can call daddy to tell him all about your exciting day."

Natasha's eyes narrowed into spiteful slits, clearly displaying exactly what she thought of Tony's humorous little comment and promising dire retribution for him even attempting it.

"By the way, I just want to let you know that sofa weighs a ton. Just keep that in mind while I'm gone 'kay?"

OoooO

The kitchen on the Stark Tower party floor is huge, it has to be. Sometimes when Tony or Stark Industries are hosting an event he'll have three or four chefs in here complete with a dozen or so little worker bees. It is a restaurant grade kitchen, but... And this is an important distinction... It is still Stark's high end restaurant grade kitchen. So yes it is loaded with metal and impermeable surfaces and other commercial kitchen must haves. However Tony's kitchen is all 304 stainless steel with a whisper brush finish, a poured and polished terrazzo floor, eighteen inch marble wall tiles anywhere the stainless back splashes aren't and wheels. Lots and lots of wheels, it isn't just on cars that Tony likes wheels. Every damn thing in this space, including the kitchen sinks are on wheels.

The wheels make Tony's kitchen infinitely customizable. Hell he even patented the system and hookups that run the perimeter of the whole room that allows a gas, water, waste, electrical or vent attachment every thirty-six inches. This means Tony never has to listen to a caterer or party planner bitch that they need another fridge, freezer, oven, sink, deep fry or cooktop lest the world will stop spinning and everyone ends up floating off into space.

Tony doesn't want to hear it, he has a whole storage room with extra equipment and his building maintenance staff can hook the shit up in their sleep.

But more importantly to Tony, this means after every party, every damn thing in the kitchen can be moved so the walls and floors and equipment can be properly cleaned. He can't stand a dirty kitchen. Consequently the kitchen Tony walks into is spotless as it should be. However since it occasionally gets re-configured he often can't find a fucking thing in it unless he hunts for it.

A few steps into the kitchen, after thinking about it for a minute he decides he should be safe enough so Tony hits the manual releases and peels out of his suit. Because it is much easier to move around indoors without it.

He has to rummage through several sets of drawers in the kitchen's prep area before he managed to locate a couple of pairs of kitchen shears. "What do you think Jarv?" he asked holding one up.

"Perhaps a sharp knife also sir," The AI suggested. "Shears are not always the best for cutting multiple rolls of material, also kitchen shears generally rely more on strength and compression than a cutting edge."

"As astute as always Jarvis."

Tony goes to one of the magnetic racks and pulls down a small knife. "What would I do without

you?”

“I’m sure I don’t know sir, but it would most likely not be pleasant.”

The towels Tony wet and wrung out for Natasha’s use are indistinguishable from the ones Loki now had flung all over his floor.

“You know Jarvis,” Tony muses, “Unless I can get the Mister Wizard on the tenure track he’s going to be bleaching her blood out of these tomorrow.”

“Indeed sir. You don’t think that SHIELD knowing Mister Odinson is in the Tower might not put a bit of a damper on that plan?” Jarvis asked, his tone pretty much indicting that he is well aware of the level of trouble SHIELD is going to cause.

Snorting, Tony opened the small well-marked fridge that kept stocked with basic bar supplies and grabbed a bottle of water and another of orange juice. Slinging a dry towel over his shoulder and placing the wet towels on top of it, Tony snatched up the scissors and knife.

“I was worried about SHIELD interfering for a while, but for some reason I’m not now.” Tony shrugged and headed towards the door. “I mean either it will work out or Asgard will take him back. I honestly don’t think there is much Fury can say about my involvement either way.”

“Which do you think is more likely to occur?”

“Me? I think Frigga is not to be messed with. He’ll stay and Fury is fucked. Good and properly without any lube.” Tony smirked pausing at the wide swinging door. “You know what else I think Jarv?”

“I am agog to find out sir.”

“Smart ass. Yeah, anyhow, I think Reindeer Games is tired of doing laundry and might be ready to try something else. Especially something that is better paid.”

“Well sir, Mister Odinson does always keep his eye on the bottom line finance wise so you may well be correct. Of course,” Jarvis paused a moment before continuing in the admonishing tone of someone who has tried repeatedly without success to get a point across, “I think he would have agreed several months ago if you had not kept badgering him on topics he feels pertain to Asgardian security.”

When Jarvis was right he was right. But hey, no time for admitting that right now. Right now Tony had to go make nice with the scantily clad assassin in the party room.

Making nice with a scantily clad hot chick sounds like it should be a whole lot of fun, but knowing this particular scantily clad chick as well as he does Tony knows it’s going to be anything *but* fun.

Tony reluctantly left the kitchen, mentally girding his loins... Or whatever it is called when one is preparing for a shit-storm about to break over their head. After a several more moments of thought Tony decided that whatever it was called it wasn’t going to be fun. In fact Tony is just hoping that his not-fun won’t involve any broken bones.

OoooO

“Get that away from me Stark.” Natasha hissed slapping at the bottle of water Tony held out to her. Tony shook his stinging hand as it skittered across the room. He was glad that he hadn’t removed the cap before offering it to her.

Nat was obviously still pissed that Tony had been unable to get the knots out of her shirt. Tony'd tried, but Loki tied a wickedly tight knot. He should have just cut it like he wanted to in the first place. Because honestly, hunching above her almost naked ass while she leaned over the side of the couch to give him access to her wrists had made him feel way too flushed for safety. So despite her muffled refusal he had resorted to cutting her loose anyhow.

If there was one person in the world Tony did not want to have an unauthorized boner around; it was a still cuffed to the couch Natasha. He'd already cut her ankles loose from each other, which is why she could at least stand and had mostly cut through the knot on the gag, so the moment Natasha's wrists were free he jumped out of retaliation range.

"What the hell were you thinking?" Natasha yelled, her mouth finally free after she had spent a minute or two wrestling to rip off the mostly-cut gag.

"That you might have cotton fuzz in your mouth?" Tony said in his best seriously sincere while deliberately misunderstanding voice. "I have orange juice if you'd rather, but it's in a glass bottle, so I'd appreciate it if you didn't slap it across the room."

"I meant about having Loki here on earth."

"You're mad because I had to cut your shirt and pants aren't you?"

"Starrrrrrrk!" Growled the assassin standing as threateningly as she could while still tethered to a couch.

"See, I knew you were. Hey, I'm sorry but I did try to undo the knots." Tony gave a little half smile and hunched his shoulders in a conciliatory shrug...

That didn't seem to be working. Natasha was still so pissed she spasmodically clenching and unclenching her fists.

Big surprise there.

"Fine. Jarvis, call security and get them to send up a Stark Industries gimmie-shirt for Nat to wear." He raked his eyes down Natasha's very bruised body. "At least an extra-large I think, Nat needs the length to cover that luscious tush of hers. Oh and have one of the bots get her shoes and socks."

"Sure you're not thirsty?" He again held up the juice. "Fine, I'll drink it then," Tony said at her vehement gesture of refusal. He ended up perched on the edge of the side chair furthest from the shackled SHIELD agent.

"I'm going to kill you." Natasha's voice throbbed with loathing, her features were twisted and every muscle in her body practically vibrated in rage.

God did the woman have some killer thighs. Literally even.

Tony took a moment to appreciate the taut expanse of belly, leg and thigh Natasha was sporting. Sighing mentally the engineer grudgingly returned his attention to what she was actually saying, before she decided to rip out his spleen and use it as a candy dish or something equally gruesome.

"I don't know what kind of game you are playing at Stark, but you should have called us immediately."

"Yeah. Well. It doesn't always work like that Red."

“Sir, I have had Agent Romanoff’s t-shirt and shoes placed in your private elevator.”

“Great. Back in a second Nat. Don’t go anywhere okay?”

Ignoring her demands to be let loose immediately and glad her current state of dress meant he didn’t have to worry about her shooting him in the back Tony sauntered through the vestibule to pick up the shirt, shoes and socks left in the elevator.

“Jarvis get Coulson on the phone for me will you?”

“Of course sir.

Humming to himself Tony wandered back into the party kitchen, poking around until he found a clean plastic bucket that was normally used for filling tubs of ice. He popped a roll of paper towels and a few bottles of water in it before tucking the now towel wrapped shoes and neatly folded gimmie t-shirt on top.

“Sir I have Agent Coulson on the phone.”

“Great, send it to my cell will ya Jarv? Thanks.” Tony hopped up on one the stainless work tables. He swung his feet like a kid and scrubbed his hand through his hair, ruffling it into even more of a mess than it had been. “Oh and let me know if Natasha does anything she shouldn’t okay.”

“Of course sir.”

Tony smiled and opened his ringing phone. “Phil buddy where’re at right now? Uh huh. Think maybe you could swing over this way? Now would I call you if it wasn’t important? Seriously Phil, I need you here like yesterday. I’ll tell you when you get here. No, not until you’re here. Just you. Great, an hour and a half will work for me. Sure see you then. Oh wait, bring some pants and a shirt that would fit Natasha ‘kay? Bye.”

He snapped the phone shut before Coulson could question him about the clothes. “Jarvis, when Phil gets here I want... Oh perhaps five of our better armed guards out on the emergency stair landing before he gets out of the elevator.”

When he returned to the main room he saw that Natasha had grabbed the towels Tony left on the couch and was nearly finished cleaning the bloody smears off her body. She scowled when Tony walked over towards her.

Toeing the bucket to just within her reach Tony said, “Phil’s on his way over, he says he’ll be here in an hour and a half. But with traffic? Who knows. I have a few things to take care of until he gets here so...” he pointed to the bucket. “Shirt, shoes, something to drink... and paper towels and a bucket in case...” Tony trailed off; pretty sure she got the idea.

Natasha’s look promised hot knives, pokers and maybe a few lit cigars, her voice was low and saturated with menace. “You have no idea how much trouble you are in Stark.”

“Me?” Tony was stung at her arrogance. “What about you? Breaking and entering, assault, trespassing lots of charges to choose from there Nat.”

“War Criminal?” Natasha spat, giving him a look that was clearly showed she thought he was insane, which was not really something Tony was prepared to argue against. At least not at the moment.

Tired of glaring at her Tony decided to go for a bit more information. “So... Natasha. What made

you decide to invade my tower illegally in the first place?”

“Word on the social circuit Tony is that you have a friend staying with you, one that is on house arrest. A really good looking buddy who was convicted of insider trading.”

“Really? Super spies keeping up with society gossip? Crap Nat I would have never taken you for a Page Six junkie.” Tony scrutinized the spy. “I had you pegged for more of a TMZ kinda girl.”

Not the least bit self-conscious about only being in her underwear, Natasha just sat there looking at him. She was obviously trying to make him nervous... Which so was not going to happen.

So they sat there a few minutes, until Tony’s had to break the silence.

“Yeah. And? How exactly does that translate into ‘Go visit Tony, Lo--.’” No sound came out of Tony’s open mouth. Ignoring the strange look Natasha was throwing his way he tried to smooth the slip over, “Tony has a really strange guest staying at his tower? Totally worth breaking and entering for. Pardon me but I don’t exactly see how you made the connection here.”

“There was no connection Stark. They are saying you, you Tony Stark, have a friend staying with you.”

Tony waited a moment, then lifted his hands in a sour ‘Yeah. And?’ gesture.

This time Natasha did roll her eyes. “Oh come on now Tony, we both know that you don’t have any friends. So it wasn’t hard to figure out you were up to something. But even we didn’t immediately think murdering alien invader. While that is what it turned out to be, it’s a little farfetched even for as paranoid an organization as SHIELD. But then adding in the books, several of them pointing to Asgard and then yes, one or two people had a bit of an inkling that something might be up.”

Stung, Tony glared at her.

“I have friends.” Tony’s voice was petulant as his expression.

“Tony, what the hell is Loki doing here?”

“Rhodey is a friend, so is Bruce. And hey, Pepper and I are still friends.”

Natasha gave him a disgusted look. “And you would be taking a spare girlfriend home for Pepper?”

“Well no. But it’s possible. Pep is very open minded I’ll have you know.”

“Wonderful, thanks for sharing Tony. I’ll keep that in mind. But could we just focus on the fact that you have the commander of a recently defeated alien army living in your tower. How is this even possible? Why isn’t he in Asgard?”

“Simple explanation Nat. All very above board, but sadly it’s above your pay grade.”

“I’m sure it is Tony. And Fury’s?” The assassin asked sceptically.

“Well duh. Believe it or not there are a lot of people on the food chain above Fury. No matter what crap he might try to make the masses believe.”

“I still think you have no idea how much trouble you are in.”

“And I am still telling you you’re wrong. Anyhow, I have a few things I have to do right now.” Not immediately turning his back on her, since she now had a few things that could be fired at his head, Tony headed towards the elevator. “Jarvis will keep you company, see ya in a bit.”

Tony was almost to the big double doors when she called out. “Tony! I had three knives. Be careful.”

Looking over his shoulder he saw that she had almost dropped the scowl she’d been wearing since she got there. “Aw.” Tony winked at her. “I’ll be careful Red. Thanks.”

Tony felt all warm and fuzzy inside. How cute was it that she was worried about him at the same time she wanted to kill him. She was kinda like Pepper but with more guns or something.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for the many lovely comments. ;)

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies and Mima Mai. Many, many thanks for your assistance ladies.

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Playing Nice

Chapter Summary

Coulson, hard truths and Oscar worthy performances.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 27 - Playing Nice

“Mister Odinson,” Loki looked up from where he was laying on the bed as Jarvis’ voice drifted down from the ceiling. He’d already showered and changed into the clean clothes that Jarvis had delivered along with the medical supplies. He’d completely cleaned the bite and all the other scratches and scrapes he’d received. The bite hurt like blazes, but at least it was taped up enough not to bleed all over him anymore. The disinfectant Jarvis supplied would prevent infection of the scratches, but the bite would need to be monitored because of the excess bacteria involved. Loki also had to keep an eye on the butterfly strips, if they didn’t hold he would need stitches. Midgardian healing procedures were nothing if not barbaric.

Closing his eyes he folded his hands lightly on his chest, the long white fingers of his left hand splayed out protectively over the bandage. Loki wished bitterly he had dared to break one of the wench’s arms. If he could have taken her down decisively at the beginning of the fight he wouldn’t have been injured. Of course he also wished that his mother had left a few healing stones with Stark in case he was ever in need of them.

Not that Loki was surprised at things not working out the way he wished them too. Long before he had ended up on Midgard, going back the last century even, it seemed his wishes seldom came true.

Not being a total idiot however, Loki was well aware that in previous years he had lived an enviable life, so self-pity now would be the greediest form of indulgence. After all he had spent centuries pursuing his own interests despite his Father’s disapproval, interests that other young Æsir males of lesser rank would not have been permitted. Loki couldn’t help but occasionally wonder what Odin thought of how he spent his days now. In the past his ability to easily write clear reports and formulate contingency plans was something that was appreciated at least as a useful skill for a younger ‘not destined to be the hero of Asgard’ prince.

After all, second princes were almost expected to have a few highly questionable habits. Barring his study of magic, which Thor had no talent for anyhow; Loki’s questionable habits were at least

not the type to lure his brother into corruption. And his recent activities most certainly could not be considered debauched by even the most hidebound of elders. Nor was there any way that Thor could have been lured into spending hours at dance and even more hours as an inky-fingered scribbler of books, even if Loki had been trying to corrupt him.

Loki smiled internally. Not that inky-fingers were part of being an effeminate Midgardian scribbler these days.

“Mister Odinson, you need to wake up.” Jarvis repeats a bit louder.

Loki’s lips thinned as the corners turned down, but he opened his eyes. He had been favored by the Norns, but now this is what his life has been reduced to. Prince Loki of Asgard now spent his days being ordered around by a spirit that was in the service of a craftsman. But like he had done so many times already in his life, Loki decided not to aggravate those with power over him since that was seldom a winning strategy.

“Mister Stark needs to speak to you, but before he can come into your cell he needs you to tell him where the third knife is.”

Loki grinned, tipping his head towards the ceiling in a salute. “So you know about that do you?” he asked, suppressed amusement rumbling in his tone. “I suppose the woman told you?” His still, soft question now slightly mixed with an odd sort of amusement.

“Does it matter?” Jarvis asked curiously.

In the end it really doesn’t, since Loki isn’t sure what good the knife would have done him anyway. Rolling onto his side and sitting up carefully so as not to pull on the tape sutures holding his wound together is painful, but tolerable. When Loki was finally sitting upright, he gripped the edges of the bunk tightly and regarded his sock covered feet a few moments before looking impishly up at the ceiling through a wavy tumble of half damp black hair.

“I had to try,” Loki said with a small smile, hoping that Jarvis doesn’t decide to hold this against him.

“I know sir.” Jarvis tells him understandingly. “We don’t have a lot of time, and Sir does have some items he desperately needs to speak to you about. So if you could tell me now I would appreciate it.”

It does briefly cross Loki’s mind to make them hunt for the knife, but he never really seriously considers that. Having been found out, there is no sense in prolonging the search. That would only cost him good will from a cup that fills far too slowly to be squandered. Besides, the knife had been secreted quickly in a area with few accessible hiding places, it would not take them long to find it themselves once they start looking for it.

No, the smart thing for him to do is gracefully surrender its hiding place.

“Of course Jarvis, if you would have someone look under the washer that the guns were placed; it will be somewhere under there.”

OoooO

It took Tony lying on his stomach using a long metal ruler that he had brought with him to tease the flat ceramic knife out from under the large washer.

“Jarvis, how the hell did he get this damn knife this far under here without you noticing?”

Tony had retrieved both the knife and the wet guns before Jarvis spoke again.

“He says he slid it tang first down the inside of his pants and then nudged it under the washer with his toes while loading the guns into it.”

You had to give it to the guy, Loki thought quick under pressure.

Jarvis continued, in a slightly apologetic tone, “I am sorry sir; I must have been more distracted than I realized watching Agent Romanoff.”

“Really Jarvis? What a dog you are.” Tony wagged his eyebrows and shot the AI’s nearest camera a playful smile.

“By the situation sir, not I assure you by Agent Romanoff’s state of undress.” Jarvis retorted somewhat testily.

“Hey. I don’t judge. I often have that same problem Jay.”

“Thank you sir, I appreciate your understanding.” Jarvis said, verbally rolling his eyes.

Tony wrapped all three weapons in a towel and put them in his private elevator before going to see his favorite Norse felon.

As Tony approached the cell, the glass cleared. He rapped smartly on the exterior door as it was sliding open. “Mind if I come in?” He asked waiting for the inner door to cycle open.

Loki just shook his head ruefully, “And if I say ‘Yes I do mind’ then what Stark?”

Tony laughed hopping up to sit in his favorite place the top of the desk. “I come in anyhow, but feel really unloved and unwelcome.”

“Ah. Well,” Loki’s lips quirked into a small smirk. “We wouldn’t want that to happen. Please Anthony Stark come and be welcome to my humble abode.”

They sat there for several minutes in silence, smiles fading before Loki spoke.

“Injuring and restraining the woman will cause a lot of problems I dare say.” Loki’s soft voice was calm and his face was perfectly blank, not giving away any of his thoughts.

Tony had also wondered about that. But in all honesty as far as he was concerned, the fact that Natasha wasn’t dead had to weigh pretty heavily on the plus side, since she easily could have been. As fast as Jarvis was, there was no way that he could have anticipated or prevented Loki from pulling a move that would have broken the assassin’s neck. Short of tasing him from the git-go of course. In which case Tony might very well have been looking at the body of a dead ex-god right now and be worrying about what he was going to do about that.

Definitely not something Tony would have wanted in the least; first of course because it might have greatly shortened own Tony’s life. Loki’s mom and brother would have been majorly pissed to say the least. As would Father of the Year, who was absolutely not someone you wanted jacked off at you. That Odin had future plans for baby boy was apparent, otherwise the head god wouldn’t have allowed the whole Loki incarcerated on Earthgard safely plan. The second reason being that Loki really wasn’t that big an asshole when he wasn’t all blazing blue eyed crazy. Reason two point oh one being that Tony hadn’t seen one single indication that ‘Blue Eyed Crazy’ Loki even existed anymore. Not one manic laugh, not one ‘Bag of Cats’ smile, not one ‘Insanity is my Friend what have I to fear’ moment.

“You know--” Tony stopped watching Loki’s rapidly beating heart. If the deity knew he had ‘Tell’ he would have been panicking like there was no tomorrow. So was it really fair to add to the guy’s stress level? Especially since seeming calm was obviously so important to him? Besides, Tony found it helpful to know what actually upset the mischief maker. Sure he could check the monitor feed from the security cuff he wore, but this was more immediate and let him know when it was time to back off or change the subject.

So the all too frequently pokerfaced man sitting in front of him asked how much trouble he was now in. Still not realizing that his current clothing allowed Tony a sure indication of just how anxious the god was to get an answer.

“No. Or I should say not with me you aren’t. Unfortunately the people who employ Natasha aren’t going to be happy.”

“Because we fought?” When Tony didn’t answer Loki pensively tapped his lower lip a few times. “Or perhaps something that I did during the period I can’t remember?”

Tony of course still couldn’t answer, but if the person asking the questions asked enough of them they couldn’t help but get at least an idea of what was wrong.

“Ah. This is going to be a large problem?”

Swinging his feet like a kid, Tony considered the question, his eyebrows furrowed in calculation. Now had this been a math calculation of power consumption vs wind resistance Tony would have had the answer instantly. However genius that he was, Tony’s area of expertise was not in either politics or psychology. So his answer was not as decisive as he would have liked it to be.

Granted SHIELD was going to have kittens, Fury himself possibly a stroke. Neither of which had a downside as far as Tony was concerned. But honestly what would they do? They had already conceded that Asgard needed to be handled delicately or they would not have released the Tesseract or Loki in the first place. Of course they would not be happy that Earth had become Club Fed for Asgard’s highest ranking prisoner, but it would put Odin or at least Thor in their debt to some degree.

“It doesn’t have to be but it could,” Tony told him hesitantly, still turning possible scenarios over in his mind. “A man named Coulson is coming here in less than an hour. He will insist on seeing you. If you don’t appear totally harmless to him that could be a big problem for you and your mom.”

“If I appear dangerous he would want me returned to Asgard.” Now it was Loki’s turn to be hesitant. “And this would be something my mother does not want to happen?”

Tony nodded curtly, “Not only doesn’t she want it to happen, you shouldn’t want it either. It could be very bad if Coulson recommends that you be returned.”

Loki studied him intently. Strange lights would occasionally flick into his eyes as he considered the words between the words. “Many horrible things can happen to even the highest in prison.”

Feeling almost faint with relief, Tony nodded and pasted a sickly smile on his face, “Yeah. They can. Even the United States has had problems with prisoner abuse.”

A wide eyed, haunted expression flitted across Loki’s face; before the young god looked down at his feet trying to keep his composure.

“I would imagine that sometimes the highborn are even singled out for such mistreatment,” he said still studying the floor, a thin note not quite banished from his voice.

“Yeah. That’s been known to happen. More than once even.”

Loki’s head snapped up and his eyes locked on Tony’s. After what seemed like an eternity he offered lightly, “Indeed? That sounds most unfortunate for those involved. I have read that it can sometimes result in severe injuries.”

Keeping his gaze steady, willing the god to understand how serious the situation was Tony replied, “And sometimes even worse things than beatings have been known to happen in this country... as well as others.”

“Ah.” Loki’s reply was more than a sigh, but not much more. He held his mask but his pupils widened a bit, obviously unwelcome thoughts causing the color to drain from his face.

Ignoring the white knuckled grip the other man had on the edge of his bed Tony let the god see how tired he was. “Loki, it really is time to play nice.”

OoooO

Since the party floor was out, what with Nat up there chilling and Tony still didn’t want SHIELD anywhere near his private areas, Tony decided to meet Coulson in one of the smaller corporate levels conference rooms. Jarvis of course, alerted security of the change in plans. As soon as one of the guards ushered Coulson into the room and shut the door behind him, the four other guards would take up positions in the hallway. And of course Tony had a portable suit beside his chair.

Tony indicated a chair across the table from where he sat and told Jarvis to get several screens ready as soon as all the time wasting pleasantries with Phil had been observed.

“So Stark. We have a problem?”

“Yeah. Well... We have a couple of them right now...” Coulson looked on politely while Tony tried to marshal his thoughts into something that would reduce the risk of him getting shot. Deciding whatever he said was going to be a cluster-fuck at first Tony decided to just go all in.

“Okay. You know what, I’m just going to show you. Jarvis, entertainment floor please.”

“Well that certainly explains why you wanted clothes to fit her. Can I ask what happen to her original ones?” Coulson asked calmly, hands loosely folded on the table. He pulled his gaze away from the t-shirt and shoe-only wearing super assassin who was sitting bolt upright on Tony’s couch and gave the engineer a mildly inquiring look.

“She attacked someone who subdued her and then used her own clothes to immobilize her. I couldn’t get the knots untied so I cut them,” the billionaire said with a shrug, as if super hero assassins were routinely trussed up in his tower. “What I’d like to know is why she broke into private areas of my building?”

“Did she? She has been in the building on numerous occasions before, and I understand that she still comes around to have coffee with a few of the ladies she used to work with. That’s hardly trespassing or breaking and entering.” Coulson’s faint smile was as irritating as ever Tony decided.

“Jarvis? Did Natasha sign in with the lobby guards? And if so, did she indicate who it was that she was here to see?”

“No sir, there is no record of her signing in, or indeed entering the building since the last time she and Agent Barton visited a few weeks ago.”

“So. No sign in record. So trespassing at the very least is established.”

“And who was the alleged assault victim? You?”

There just was no getting Coulson rattled.

“Actually no. My laundry guy.” Tony really wants to tear the Band-Aid off, but he just can’t bring himself to do it just yet.

Not that he is a coward or anything.

Coulson lifted a sceptical brow at him. “Your laundry guy? You have a laundry employee that took down Romanoff and was able to truss her up with her own clothing?”

Tony groaned and slumped down onto the table, burying his face in his folded arms. Then lifting enough to see Coulson he asked, “Jarvis... may we see the man of the hour please.”

Coulson froze when the screen lit up showing a dejected looking god of mischief sitting on his bunk, wall cuff attached. Peeking up at the frozen agent sitting across from him, Tony was completely impressed with his calm demeanor but decided it might be best to sit all the way back up now.

Just in case he had to move in a hurry.

“Clear the walls Jarv and let us see the whole floor.” Various other angles were displayed on the screen, a shot from the elevator showing the overturned towel cart with the cell and laundry room visible in the distance. A close up of the floor and wall area with splashes of blood, a different angle of the cell from a distance showing the double door arrangement. The inside of the laundry room, a closer shot of the god, blood tinged bandage in place.

“Stop.”

Coulson studied the screen closely for several minutes before he turned to Tony and asked in a quiet voice, “Is that who I think it is?”

“Sort of.”

“Sort of?”

“Yeah. Sort of but not really. Is it who you think it is? No. But perhaps a version of him? You know, like the person who was formerly known as him?”

Tony licked his lips nervously, “Then... Yeah.”

A chill ran down Tony’s spine at the ‘dead eyed’ look Coulson turned upon him. “Explain Stark, and you better make it good,” the SHIELD agent demanded flatly.

“Actually, I can’t really. But ya know what? Let me tell you what a geas is.”

OoooO

Fortunately for Tony, Coulson was also very, very good at listening between the lines.

As Tony had suspected, he wanted to see Loki. Tony put on one of his portable repulsors in case Agent tried any funny stuff and took up his usual seat on top of the desk. Coulson sat in Loki’s desk chair and just observed for about an hour without saying anything. If Coulson had been

hoping that Loki would start babbling, he was completely out of luck.

The god sat on the bunk looking just like a kid in Juvie, his arms were wrapped around drawn up knees, occasionally looking over at Coulson through hair half tumbled over his face, then flicking a look towards Tony before closely studying the material covering his knees.

If it was a 'Young Kid In Over His Head' act for Coulson's benefit, Loki totally nailed it. Of course the god's appearance, looking a good ten years younger than his stressed, crazy insane 'Kneel Before Me' performance helped too. Adding the two together, Tony could totally see the god as a shoo-in for an Oscar.

Finally, with one of his tiny Coulson smiles the Agent spoke. "Hello Loki, my name is Phil Coulson." He held out his right hand towards the god. Loki looked at the hand and at Coulson for a long moment before again flicking a look at Tony who nodded.

Hesitantly, the god held out his own hand, wincing slightly when the movement pulled on his bandaged injury. "Coulson or son of Coul?" he asked low and quiet as he allowed his hand to be captured.

Coulson gave him a lopsided grin and held his hand for a moment before releasing it. "Well your brother calls me 'Son of Coul', but actually Coulson is correct. Or Phil, either one."

"I did not want to fight the woman. She attacked me." Loki watched Coulson carefully waiting to see if he was going to say anything. "I tried not to hurt her, Jarvis watched; he tried to get her to stop."

"Yeah, bit of a misunderstanding. She thought you were someone else."

Tony knew the moment Loki realized that the agent probably wasn't someone under the geas. The god's eyes lit up and he leaned forward, wincing but otherwise ignoring his wound. "Who did she think I was?" he asked hurriedly, intently studying Coulson's face.

"No! We're not going there." Tony interrupted, Loki's lips thinned in frustration, but fortunately for Tony he remembered what was at stake and decided not to argue in front of the SHIELD agent. "Phil, I think we've spent enough time here, can we revisit this another time? I really think we need to go see Natasha, before she starts chewing holes in my couch."

OoooO

"I have a repulsor Red, so no funny stuff." Tony said as he tossed her the key from a safe distance away. "And I mean funny only to you, like pulling my spine out of my body or trying to use my skull as a soup bowl."

Natasha was completely pissed at him, and no doubt wanted to think of imaginative ways to hurt him. Seeing her gun freshly washed from the laundry room, complete with heavy soap residue from Loki using way too much laundry detergent doubtless would have sealed his demise if not for Coulson being present. Accepting the clothes she was handed with ill grace, Natasha continued to curse and threaten Tony until Coulson gave the assassin his patented 'don't go there' look.

Tony really, really wanted to rag Natasha about the smack down she had taken, but after looking at her bruised face, arms and legs he and remembering what her rib cage looked like he decided that now would not be a good time to do it. He wasn't being a coward or anything.

Honestly.

Nor was Tony worried that Coulson would remove his protection if he twitted Phil's favorite field agent about her almost unprecedented failure in hand to hand combat. Rather Tony just decided it would be more fun with a bigger audience. Like maybe next time the Avengers had a meeting. Bruce would get a kick out of it at least. And Tony was not in the least depending on the additional safety factor that he would have. Natasha wouldn't be able to go off on him with Brucie around.

Sitting at the bar listening to the two SHIELD agents argue under their breath about how exactly they were going to tell Fury was starting to annoy the crap of him. While he waited, Tony called up Loki's contract and redacted quite a few items while the two agents still continued to argue in a hissing barrage of blame. Most of the blame they seemed content to heap on Tony's head, but he was at least glad to hear Natasha come in for her fair share.

"No one knew you were there, you should have made a report before attacking." Coulson had said in as sibilant a voice as you could have without any inflection.

And that seemingly was Coulson's big bitch. Tony's lips thinned in annoyance, he too could read between the lines too when he wanted too. Both SHIELD as an organization and Fury as an individual, would have been absolutely overjoyed to have something big like this to hold over the billionaire's head. Natasha's actions however weakened their threat.

Tony tiredly wondered what they wanted this time? He has no doubt it was something he would have given them anyway freely, but Fury would rather demand than ask.

"Oh Jarvis, my Jarvis. Do me a favor buddy and call Big Daddy One Eye for me will you?"

"Stark, I think we need to get a few things worked out before we bother the director--"

Tony rode right over Coulson, "And while you're at it, see if Pepper can take a call."

"Ms. Potts is still in the building sir, if you would rather see her in person sir."

"Hey, whichever one she prefers Jarvis," Tony replied, turning to shoot a bitter smile at Coulson.

"And you might want to tell her that Natasha tried to take a chunk out of our 'guest', I think she'll be interested to hear that."

"Indeed sir. Shall I also send a suit, or do you want security in closer?"

"Closer but not within hearing distance."

"Stark, I don't think you--" Coulson stopped as the emergency door opened and the five armed guards who had been trailing Tony's movements throughout the tower entered the floor and spread out, two to wait just inside the kitchen, one in the entry hall and two heading out to the terrace where they could see but not hear what was going on.

Coulson and Natasha both managed to look utterly betrayed, in an understated emotionally repressed way of course, they were employees of SHIELD after all.

"What?" Tony said with lopsided smirk and a bit of a rueful chuckle. "You guys crack me up, you know that? You pull shit on me all the time and then have the nerve to look offended at a time like this?"

And it all went downhill from there. Pepper showed up in person, Fury got the big screen and then it was all over but the shouting.

Fury was of course livid that someone besides him was involved in approving anything like the

return of Loki to Earth. Not so much that he was here Tony noticed, but more that he was shut out of the loop and hadn't had his shot at getting any advantage out of the god's incarceration.

"I fail to understand your problem Director Fury," Pepper said as she pointed out various items in the heavily redacted contract that Tony had sent to Fury. "SHIELD was specifically not to be notified and that clause was approved by the several government departments with the authority to do so. Mister Stark is not an employee of SHIELD and is therefore not required to advise you of his actions. What I do understand is that you had an agent illegally entering a private residence causing harm to a member of the Royal Family of Asgard, who is in Mister Stark's care. Could you explain why that happened please?"

"Yeah Nat, what the hell was with the 'Jaws' re-enactment? Seriously. Was I right? Did you miss lunch or something? What the fuck were you thinking?" Natasha growled in displeasure, pissing Tony off. After all, he was the one that was going to have to deal with the medical aftermath, not her. "You know I'm going to need your shot record from the vets now don't you?" Tony would have continued, but Pepper shut him down with a quick look.

"Well?" Pepper prodded Fury, her hands were calmly folded in her lap, but from her tone of voice there was no doubt that Pepper was pissed.

"We didn't know he was there obviously," Fury ground out, obviously seething over the whole mess. "We just wanted to know the identity of the mystery house guest who Stark was bringing home the occasional extra one night stands for."

Tony was miffed. What did they care? They were one night fricken stands. What was the damn problem?

"See? This is why nobody trusts you guys." He huffed.

"So on the basis of '*We want to know why*' you did exploratory trespassing? Stark International works on many proprietary items; we take our security quite seriously and can't allow an incident like this to happen without a strong response."

"So do we Ms. Potts, especially when one of our consultants is breaching it by sheltering a war criminal," Fury retorted.

"A charge that was never made correct? One which has been since discredited by evidence of mind control such as that suffered by the also uncharged Agent Barton. Loki is being held here with proper governmental approval as a favor to the Asgardians. Mister Stark is not getting into the middle of a jurisdictional dispute with SHIELD. What problems you have with other agencies is no concern of his. What I currently have to worry about are damages to our security from your agent, assault by your agent and a threatened breach of confidentiality due to illegally obtained information by your department."

"We're going to have to report this to Asgard too Pep. I don't imagine Big Daddy Odin is going to be very happy. I know Thor and his mother the queen aren't going to be."

Fury smiled nastily into the camera, "You can report anything you want to whoever you want Stark, we didn't agree to this so if we don't get complete access there is nothing to keep us from letting the information go public. How will you and Stark international feel about the publicity from that?"

"Well Nick," Pepper retorted, apparently less than thrilled with Fury's manner of address. "I would guess that something would have to be done to blunt that information when it hits the news." She

turned to Tony who was tapping away at his table. “Tony?”

“Huh?” Tony quickly ran through the last few minutes of conversation.

“Ah. Names and numbers of the people remanded to SHIELD’s custody who have disappeared? A list of the elected officials they’ve blackmailed? Details of how they have undermined other governmental departments?” Smiling at the smoldering Fury, Tony shrugged, “All of which and more are also poised for immediate release in case anything ever happens to either of us. Not to mention that all the money provided by me or Stark International will immediately stop upon my death or at the discretion of my secret trustees in the event of my disappearance.”

He smirked at Fury’s image. “Not to mention how bad that would piss off Odin Space Viking All Father. Just so you know.”

Fury looked like he was going to pop a blood vessel. “Look Nick, you can make a lot of problems for me, but I can do the same for you. Trust me when I tell you I was not happy about this whole mess and didn’t want to do it any more than you wanted to give up the Tesseract.”

“Tony what the hell were you thinking agreeing to it at all? Loki is supposed to be in prison! Not running around on earth folding towels for your company and banging hookers.” Natasha snarled, anger visibly coursing through her entire body.

“Well you know Red, dependable help is hard to find. And they weren’t hookers, they just very enthusiastic young ladies.”

Pepper made a strangled little noise and glared at him, her brows slightly raised in a strange mixture of astonishment and disbelief.

“Only you Tony...”

“Oh come one Pep, it only happened three times. Sometimes you have to think outside the exercise yard. Besides, it did wonders for his morale.”

“Tony....” Natasha growled her voice promising imminent death which Tony totally ignored because for a change it wasn’t him in trouble for doing something stupid it was her.

“He is still in prison Nat, which you violated the security of. And I will have an explanation of how that occurred before you leave. But getting back to my point, did you not notice the fancy shmancy high security cell on that floor? Where, I might add, he spends the greater part of his day. He is pretty much in solitary confinement twenty-four seven. Pardon me if I thought he needed a little mental health break. Besides, General Chang over there should be happy, at least he found his mystery author.” Fury’s sour expression didn’t change, but Coulson at least perked up at that bit of news.

“Really Stark? So he wrote both of them?”

“No Phil. All of them. Look, for the last few years with only two minor little bobbles, I have played warden to a fairly thoughtful accountant who does modern dance with an Asgardian twist for exercise and writes to stave off boredom.”

“And laundry?” Phil asked calmly.

“And laundry for cash to defray his cost of incarceration.”

Coulson and Fury exchanged a long distance looks. “This is how it’s going to work Stark,” Fury

said as he started tapping something on an unseen monitor. “He can stay there, since you do have a contract, but SHIELD will need to do a complete medical and physical exam and debrief him. Also anything else he’s written or writes in the future we’ll want to examine to make sure it is safe to release where a foreign power can view it and I want at least two agents in line of sight of him at all times. Coulson will give you the list of names of who can be admitted onto that floor.”

Tony felt his blood pressure spike.

“I don’t think so Nicky, my tower, my contract, my charge, my rules. No one of yours is going to be traipsing freely through my tower, let alone several of them on rotating shifts.”

Fury and Tony exchanged wide smiles filled with far too many teeth to be friendly.

“Fine, I have no objections to transferring him immediately to a secure SHIELD location. In fact I prefer it. Coulson will facilitate the move.”

Chapter End Notes

Please comment! If you are absolutely not a commenting kind of person, a bookmark or Kudo would really help the story placement in the search engine and be much appreciated.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies and Mima Mai. Many, many thanks for your assistance ladies.

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Stark Tower

Chapter Summary

Fury is furious, Jarvis offers to buy a playpen and there are doombots. Sigh... Some days Tony just can't catch a break.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

Our story so far for those of you just tuning in... Tony and Frigga make the deal, bribes are offered and accepted, Pepper is not happy, neither apparently is Odin. Loki's physical injuries are cured but his mental issues are causing new ones. Tony is meh, Bruce and Pepper get excited about them. Oh and Loki makes a break for freedom and does a little freefall, Tony is very much not amused. Loki takes issue with Tony's accounting practices and starts his own prison work shop. Mom saves money, but Tony can't get any new material. The Loki Exercise channel is a big hit... at least with Tony. Fury comes to visit. He wants to know who is behind publishing company with ties to Stark Industries. Fury is curious about the political, scientific and historical writing. The bridge crew of the HeliCarrier just want to know when the sequel to a certain smut filled bodice ripper will be released. Phil is not amused. After much delay Tony goes to talk to Loki and offers him a teaching position and then gets freaked out by a demonstration of exactly how easily Loki is able to write racy material. Ummm, Natasha dropped in without an invite, Loki has been advised not to be a shit and neither Fury or Pepper are happy with each other right now...

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 28 – Stark Tower

Tony was not having a good day. After having Coulson and Natasha escorted off the premises, the engineer had been trying his best to avoid Fury. Trying for days as a matter of fact, to the point of locking down his floors when 'Agent' showed up again to personally find out why he wasn't answering or returning Fury's calls.

Like that was so hard to figure out, even if you weren't a genius. Sheesh.

So far the lock down coupled with the documents copies he'd sent had worked as a pretty decent Fury deterrent. Except for several text messages a day containing increasingly vitriolic demands for Tony to contact him that Fury had sent to him and copied to Pepper. Knowing that Tony was just having Jarvis delete his copies, Fury was obviously banking on her reading them and at least

suggesting that Tony try to solve his latest SHIELD faux pas.

Which had worked, just not in the way that Fury had hoped it would, Tony thought with an internal, gleeful grin at Fury being totally schooled by the divine Ms. Potts.

The redacted copy of his contract, the redaction of which was yet another sore spot for Fury, had been enough to keep SHIELD from trying anything more hard core than the text messages and occasional attempts by Coulson to gain entry. But sending them to Pepper so that Tony couldn't entirely ignore them had backfired in a big way. Pepper, fed up with Fury's threats, had made a phone call to Deputy Secretary of Defense Nudact, the head Washington heavy hitter who had also signed the damn contract. Apparently Nick had been gracing Tony with his full attention and hadn't tried to contact any of the others at all.

What a ball-less bastard Fury was.

To Tony's utter delight it seemed that in addition to not being one to fuck with, Nudact had a wicked turn of phrase. He'd emailed Fury with his thoughts on the matter and a notation that it was also being copied to Tony. You could almost slice the '*don't you dare think of fucking with me*' vindictiveness in Nudact's email. Tony was thinking of getting a copy of it matted and framed so he could send it to Fury as a gift on his next birthday.

While Nudact's email hadn't stopped Fury from screaming at Tony entirely, the levels of threat that Pepper was passing through to him had at least been turned down several notches.

You totally had to give Fury props for not knowing when to quit.

Then today, Doom and his freak bots showed up. Like Tony hadn't had enough crap to deal with this week.

It was harder to ignore Fury when he hijacked the Avengers communicator system and vented his frustration at Tony during lulls in the action.

"Tony is this true?" Steve asked when Fury had paused to pop an aneurysm.

"Spangles can we talk about this later? I have two doom bots trying to crawl up my ass."

Tony assayed a sharp turn before rolling over to blast one of the bots out of the sky with a repulsor blast.

"I've been trying to talk to you for days Stark!" Fury growled, apparently having got his breathing and blood pressure under enough control to be coherent again.

"Look, Snake Plissken, now is not the time."

Tony hit his drag flaps and was rocked by an explosion that occurred right where he should have been. It was a miss, but so close a miss that it caused him to bobble in the air a moment and drop several feet before he could steady himself.

"Tony are you okay? That was a bit close wasn't it?"

"Yeah Bruce, just a bit shook. You know I would really appreciate if the bitch fest could be put on hold until after we take care of this mess. And Jarvis, Jarvis would like it too, wouldn't you buddy?"

"Indeed sir. There are too many doom bots in the area right now. Unnecessary distractions could

cause problems.”

Tony dove down a narrow alley between two high rises in hot pursuit of the remaining bot that had been attacking him moments earlier.

“Sir, you might want to know that the tower is currently under attack and has sustained damage.” Jarvis’ calm voice issued from one of Tony’s private channels. “If possible, you may want to shift your efforts this way.”

“Crap. Keep an eye out for SHIELD too Jarvis, I don’t want them to try to use this confusion to gain entry to the building.”

OoooO

Loki had just finished pressing the last load of lab coats and was waiting for Stark’s towels and sheets to finish drying when an explosion hit the building across the street from the tower. Through the glass walls of the laundry room he could look across the street and see debris raining down from the area of a smoking crater which had appeared perhaps a half a dozen floors higher than Loki’s. He darted out of the laundry room to the main windows to get an unobstructed look. He watched as heat waves and flames ran up the side building from the damaged area. Brows furled Loki wondered what could have caused the damage when something zoomed past the window he was standing at accompanied by small pinging noises.

Jumping away from the impacted windows so fast that he stumbled backwards onto the floor, Loki could hear muffled warning sirens and then felt the floor shiver slightly. Rolling over in confusion, he did so just in time to see a wash of flame sliding down the blast proof windows on the other side of his floor. It occurred to him that he had never found out how many other floors in this tower had windows like his.

Definitely something to ask Stark someday soon.

“Jarvis!”

“Mister Odinson, it appears the building is under attack, you will want to take shelter in your room immediately.”

And Jarvis had always seemed so sensible.

“You want to lock me up while someone is trying to destroy this building? Ninety floors up in the air you want to lock me in a cage?”

“Sir, we really don’t have time to discuss this. Your room is designed to be very secure.”

“Secure from something that can put a hole in building?” Loki yelled in disbelief lying spread out on the floor, his eyes frantically sweeping back and forth noticing fast moving object flying around the building much too quickly for him to see what they were, but far too large to be birds. Loki desperately wanted to get up and press his face against the window so he could figure out what was attacking them, but there was no way he was going to depend on the supposed strength of the glass surrounding him. Not that he had any idea what he could do even if he did know what was attacking the tower.

The fact that the cause of the threat was unknown was causing him as much distress as the actual attack itself. That and being in a strange realm where he was unaware of what responses might be mounted to stop the attack. And of course the fact that he was completely and utterly without the power to defend himself while trapped in this damn delicate mortal body was the most stressful

issue of them all.

Thank you Asgard, the thought bitterly. He, Loki Odinson of Asgard was stuck on Midgard as helpless and fragile as a new-born babe. Better he should just be dead!

Completely irrational thoughts washed back and forth across his consciousness. One part of him wished he could dig his fingernails into the floor to keep himself from sliding should the building start to fall over, while another part of his brain scoffed at such childish thoughts pointing out that he would most likely be killed by falling debris long before he could be tipped out of the building to fall to his death. His mind was so overwhelmed by conflicting thoughts that he couldn't even recall the last time he had been this scared. But it had been centuries ago.

And doubtless in a situation caused by Thor.

Loki knew that his knowledge of Midgard, while improving, was spotty. However, try as he might, he couldn't recall reading that their cities were often attacked. So what exactly was happening here?

"Jarvis is this--" Loki stopped. The building he was in was under some kind of attack and his stupidly weak body was so stressed that he couldn't even think of the words that he would need to ask for the information that he wanted, no needed to find out. His splayed out limbs felt another faint tremor. A spike of something ran up his spine. Fear? Terror? Whatever it was it caused his heart to start pounding faster than it already was even as his thoughts and senses sharpened with crystal like clarity.

Over sharpened really, his addled senses caused the surrounding noise to ring and echo strangely in his ears. A hazy halo clouded his sight, wrapping background items while the objects in the forefront of his vision had edges as sharp as a knife.

"Please calm down sir, I assure you there is very little that can breach the walls of your room."

"And in the event that something causes the building to collapse, does my room have flight capabilities Jarvis?" he spat, inwardly cringing at the underlying note of fear in his voice. "Will it land safely if the building falls? Can it escape being crushed if the floors above it collapse?"

Loki wasn't becoming hysterical. He never became hysterical.

"Unfortunately not sir. But I assure you there is no need to panic; You will be quite safe."

Jarvis' attempts to assure him might have been more comforting if he hadn't heard a boom and caught a flash out of the corner of his eye where more smoke and flames erupted on the already stricken building across the street.

Loki hated being helpless. If he had his damn powers he would already be on the roof making sure that whatever was attacking them fell from the sky before it got anywhere near him. Or he would...

That could work.

Frantically he considered the very limited options available to him. Of course without his powers it would be a pitiful attempt, but then this was Midgard, so surely... Not that he had any responsibility to see that Stark's building wasn't damaged... But he was currently living in it... While he was less than happy about that, in many ways it was worlds better than being imprisoned on Asgard... Was Ms. Potts in the building this afternoon? She often wasn't but what if...

Loki rolled onto his back, so dizzy for a moment he thought he would pass out. Jarvis was shouting something at him. Trying to get him to move? He wasn't sure, he really couldn't hear with all the other noise in his head.

“SHUT UP!” He screamed balling his hands into tight fists, his entire body rigid.

Loki just needed a moment to think.

How?

What was available to him right now that might work? Amidst all the other sirens he could hear, the dryer alarm went off. Exasperated at the additional interruption when he was trying to think, he rolled his head to the side and glared at the glass walled laundry room.

Loki's dark green eyes narrowed speculatively.

Okay... That could work.

OoooO

“Fuck Jarvis, can't you take them down with the canons? Did I or did I not mount you with half a dozen canons for just such an emergency. Didn't we discuss how tired I am of dealing with building repairs?”

“You did sir. I was able to destroy three of them, but after that the rest have approached from a much lower altitude; I am unable to target them without risking damage to the buildings around us.”

“Crap, let me see if I can flush them out for you.” Tony ramped up his speed and a minute later was in position to fly a tight loop around his tower.

“I'll try to get them up in the open so you can join in.”

“You are too good to me sir.”

“Now Jarv, you know I love you.” Tony said with a smirk apparent both on his face and in his voice. He flew high above the Tower to take a good look around for approaching enemies. What Tony did not expect to see was someone exiting the stairwell on his roof during an enemy attack.

What the hell?

“Jarvis! Please tell me you *did not* let Flawed Design out of his play pen.”

“No sir, you currently have not supplied him with a play pen, but I will order one if you think it necessary.” Jarvis' tone was so snippy Tony knew he was being screwed with.

“Jarvis! What the hell is Loki doing on the roof?!” Tony dodged a bot that rocketed up from out of nowhere, turning to follow it back down while he bracketed it with a few low powered missiles, the bot having dove too close to the neighboring buildings for him to use anything more powerful. “Was that a broom he was carrying?”

As Tony feared, the bot was unfazed by his low powered attack. Unfortunately Doom was not similarly concerned with peripheral damage. The bot's counter attack caused the instruments in Tony's suit to flicker for one heart stopping moment before he was showered with debris from the building behind him.

“Yes sir, from the cleaning station on his floor. Loki is assisting sir.”

“With what? Clean up? You don’t think maybe that couldn’t wait until after all the ‘splody things are gone?”

“He has a plan sir.”

Tony groaned to himself and made a mental note to really go over Jarvis’ emergency protocols. A complete overhaul was obviously way overdue.

“Tony where’d you go?” Natasha demanded, “Hawkeye and I could use a little support.”

Rising high above his building Tony’s heart sank as another wave of bots appeared several blocks away.

“No can do Red. I am up to my incredibly well toned ass in doom bots right now.”

Doom had obviously been tweaking his attack modes, rather than dropping down on their targets like they normally did, the bots were instead flying lower, using the buildings and streets they were threading through to evade detection and provide protective cover from more lethal forms of firepower. Since unlike Doom, collateral damage considerations did limit the response options available to the Avengers.

Where the hell was Thor when you needed him? Tony grumbled to himself.

Thor might not be able to corner as well as Tony did, but he would have been more than able to out maneuver these damn doom bots. And that damn hammer of his could have batted them up to altitudes where they could be blasted with some real firepower.

Coming up for a quick overview, Tony saw that Loki had left his broom and bucket by the stairwell entrance and was currently throwing all of Tony’s very expensive patio furniture over one of the long planter boxes, clearing off the central area. On Tony’s next pass over the building he saw that the god was furiously sweeping the newly cleared area.

Tony had heard of people who cleaned when they were stressed, but really? This was crazy even for Loki. What the hell was he thinking? For that matter what the fuck was Jarvis thinking letting him loose at a time like this? In a danger zone even? If anything happened to the trickster god there would be a line forming to kill Tony. Hell, as much as Thor liked Tony, he loved his baby-bro so much more, and would probably be standing eagerly in line behind Frigga and Odin Jerk Father waiting to get in his shot at Tony.

A little pin-point of thought exploded into Tony mind. A high def, full length movie complete with major stars, about what would happen to him if Loki was killed. Tony moaned pitifully wishing he could close his inner eye as easily as he did his outer ones.

“Sir, your blood pressure just spiked dramatically.”

Holy crap!

It would be just Tony’s luck for SHIELD to find out that his supposedly secure prisoner was loose. “Jarvis, please tell me that SHIELD is not getting my suit feed right now.” He begged.

“Unfortunately sir, we are having some transmission problems. I have alerted Doctor Banner that it is a minor problem we are working on. I have also assured him that your voice communication is unaffected.”

“Well thank god for that. Good job buddy.”

“You are most welcome sir. Ms. Potts asked me to inform you that the entire building has been evacuated into the parking garage, since the streets are not currently safe. She would like it if you would make sure that the building does not collapse on them.”

“Tell her she has my solemn promise Jarv.”

“Indeed sir, I am certain that she will find that most reassuring.”

“Stark! What the fuck are you doing that you shouldn’t be?!” Fury barked. “Why are we not getting any feed from you? I do not want to hear that you are having another one of your convenient transmission problems again.”

“Umm... Fighting killer robots? Why? Does the heliCarrier need a tune up or something else that can’t wait?”

“Damn it Stark!”

Tony pulled a tight turn and decided to go east and low for a few blocks and see what might be lurking nearby. He’d only gone three blocks when he spotted a pack of doom bots flying low on one of the side streets he passed. He got turned around in time to meet them when they made it to the intersection of the street he was on.

“I got three over here, I’m going to try to lure them back your way Cap.” He called out sending a few rockets towards the bots. Still not high powered ones, but rather a few experimental ones he’d been toying with that had mini-emp, the transient disturbance field was small enough that it wouldn’t affect him or the neighboring buildings, but hopefully it was powerful enough that it would scramble some of the bots defensive systems enough to let the missile’s secondary payload do some damage.

“Make that two!” He crowed as one of the bots spiraled into the side of a building, thick blue black smoke pouring out of it.

“Tony, see if you can get them to follow you up just a bit higher as you pass me.”

“You got it Katniss,” Tony called as he ploughed through the two remaining doom bots twisting down a narrow alley as they followed him.

OoooO

Deciding that the patio was as clean as he could get it with the time available to him, Loki ran over to the stairwell and grabbed the five gallon bucket of industrial laundry soap he had dragged up the final set of steps and the small lobby broom he normally used to clean around the washing machines with. Focusing his thoughts and being careful not to splash any of the thick blue liquid where it would ruin his design, Loki dipped the tip of the broom into the now open bucket. It was hard to concentrate while worrying about being attacked, but Loki breathed through it, drawing on several centuries of practice in working under adverse conditions.

Making sure to keep his purpose firmly in mind Loki ignored the occasional trembling beneath his feet and brushed the broom onto the concrete creating a large cross with a small open circle at its center, the first figure of the protective rune he had chosen. He then overlaid the cross with four lines of equal length radiating out from the center circle into an ‘X’ shape; at the end of each arm he drew a deep ‘U’ shape. All eight spokes now looked like a trident facing outwards from the center.

It was difficult using liquid laundry soap to draw with. Since the soap was a thinner consistency than paint, Loki had to use smaller amounts so it wouldn't run and ruin his pattern. Also using a dry brush... Or rather a relatively unwieldy, dry broom meant he had to concentration on his purpose for a longer amount of time as he traced and retraced each line. He needed to make the lines solid enough for his purpose, without allowing bleeding that would alter the rune. Holding his breath at critical times and ignoring the pounding in his head at all times, Loki made his movements deliberately slow and careful. He couldn't afford to be careless, stray drips over the areas that weren't part of the rune would cause certain failure. To finish the protection rune the god crossed each spoke three times, the lines decreasing in size the closer they were to the center.

Loki had been vaguely aware of the movement around him as he completed the snowflake-like figure, but he hadn't really been able to spare any of his attention to what was actually happening with the battle. Sparing a glance skyward once he had finished he saw Stark fly past him and heard a nearby explosion that threatened to disrupt his train of thought. Breathing raggedly Loki wrenched his concentration back to his protection rune while quickly moving the broom and bucket back towards the stairs. He couldn't afford the chance of any stray splashes or spills affecting his design as there was neither the time nor the space to try again if this failed.

Moving back to the edge of his ten foot snowflake-like rune, Loki knelt down to whisper the words of activation, allowing the breath of its creator to activate protection for the building he was standing upon.

Chapter End Notes

Comments are very gratefully appreciated!

If you are absolutely not a commenting kind of person, please bookmark or Kudo, it really help the story placement in the search engine and is much appreciated.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Wildbearies and Mima Mai. Many, many thanks for your assistance ladies.

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Loki and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

Chapter Summary

Tony isn't the only one whose life flashes before his eyes.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

Our story so far for those of you just tuning in... Tony and Frigga make the deal, bribes are offered and accepted, Pepper is not happy, neither apparently is Odin. Loki's physical injuries are cured but his mental issues are causing new ones. Tony is meh, Bruce and Pepper get excited about them. Oh and Loki makes a break for freedom and does a little freefall, Tony is very much not amused. Loki takes issue with Tony's accounting practices and starts his own prison work shop. Mom saves money, but Tony can't get any new material. The Loki Exercise channel is a big hit... at least with Tony. Fury comes to visit. He wants to know who is behind publishing company with ties to Stark Industries. Fury is curious about the political, scientific and historical writing. The bridge crew of the HeliCarrier just want to know when the sequel to a certain smut filled bodice ripper will be released. Phil is not amused. After much delay Tony goes to talk to Loki and offers him a teaching position and then gets freaked out by a demonstration of exactly how easily Loki is able to write racy material. Ummm, Natasha dropped in without an invite, Loki has been advised not to be a shit and neither Fury or Pepper are happy with each other right now. The tower is attacked and Loki decides to ensure his own safety. He may be without his powers, but he isn't totally powerless ya know.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 29 –Tower Power

“Tony! Heads up. We just had eight more Doom-bots pop up on the screen by Madison and 48th Street.”

Most of today's battle was taking place in the air or on the roofs of the various buildings so Bruce was stuck in the command center. He spent his time calling out targets and helping to coordinate the Avengers, SHIELD operatives and local response personnel. It wasn't that the Hulk couldn't make it to the building tops and engage a flying enemy, he certainly could. However unless the attack became more widespread, it was generally agreed that they didn't need the destruction that the re-enactment of King Kong would entail.

“What the fuck?” Tony huffed, trying to shake off the bots currently following him. “Is Doom having these damn things made in South Korea and bringing them in by the container load or what?” Tony rolled high before doubling back over park area he’d passed a moment earlier. “Hey! William Tell! You going to do something about these now that I’ve lured them over a kill zone for you? Or you just going to sit there and admire my armor plated assets?”

“Sorry Stark I had one zip in behind me,” Barton said calmly, “I got it, but this entire building is going to need new AC units. What it didn’t wreck landing on it, I trashed making sure it was dead.”

“Cut the chatter people. Doom has finally been sighted in another group heading towards Grand Central Station. Locals managed to take out one of them but Doom still has six bots providing cover for him.”

“Of course he does Old Glory, when did he ever travel alone?” Tony thought bitterly, wondering for perhaps the fiftieth time why he built a tower and not a nice safe underground bunker somewhere. “Jarvis, Look alive, and remind me to get you some chaff spreaders or something installed for the future.”

Tony headed back towards his beautiful building, which was once again going to be under attack. While he liked remodeling as much as the next billionaire, he was honestly getting just a bit tired of it.

Despite Tony kicking up his speed, Doom had apparently beaten him back to the tower. In the distance he could see a heavy white fog was rolling off the roof and sliding down the entire building. “Fuck it all to hell!” Tony swore, wondering what kind of incendiary Victor was using that was making that much heavy smoke. Or worse, too much white smoke generally heralded a large amount of unignited flammable gases being present. “Jarvis, what kind of fire in the penthouse is causing that much smoke?” he asked as a distinctive small chime let him know he was now speaking only to Jarvis.

“Sir, I would have reported damage of that sort, I assure you there is no need to worry just yet. The smoke is from a protection procedure Mister Odinson is attempting to safeguard the building.”

“Jarvis. What the fuck are you talking about?”

Tony almost wished he could raise his face plate and rub his temples. He was getting a splitting headache, no... He was getting a migraine; the kind that only an ice pack on the forehead and really good drugs could help. Injectable pain killers. He has definitely got to think about adding those to his next suit upgrade.

“Sir, I wish I had time to explain it, but you really do need to stop Doctor Doom and his robots from attacking the tower until the smoke has had a chance to drift down to street level.” Jarvis chided him. “Unfortunately, since we have personnel in the basement garage area I can’t use the air intake fans to draw protective smoke in there. Without a substantial saturation of smoke, Mister Odinson says the integrity of those levels can’t be guaranteed.”

When this is all over, Tony swears to himself that no matter how many roving news helicopters he might attract, the first thing he is going to do is stand on his rooftop patio and scream for that Heimdall dude until Frigga carries her ass down to Earth. He wants Loki-momma to explain how her magic blocked baby-boy is still rocking his mo-jo. One or two little tricks during the escape attempt could have been a fluke. Covering an entire fucking high rise in magic Armor-All smoke is a bit too much to accept. But if it’s true, then someone in Frickin’ Viking-land was not being honest with him about the mischief maker’s powers being yanked.

A warning tone sounded in his left ear, letting him know that something is bearing down on him from that direction. Checking the specs flashed onto his HUD he guesses, “Victor?”

“So it appears sir. Although--”

“Yeah. Although... It could just be another one of his freaking decoys.” Tony agreed as Jarvis killed the privacy mode letting the background chatter of the whole crew return to his head set.

Through breaks in the buildings ahead, Tony can see a small swarm of doom-bots and a larger humanoid figure targeting his building. A moment later, numerous doom-bot weapons light up the white film of smoke drifting down his building causing it to become denser and glow for a few moments. It’s pretty apparent to Tony that worrying about his tower being hit by collateral damage is a moot point at this juncture so he decides he might as well head up high to get a clear line of sight and start slinging some damage of his own around.

“Oh god,” The engineer in him groans. “Jarvis what kind of damage are we looking at from those last hits?”

Tony starts rotating his weapon racks readying some of his nastier missiles and the heavy duty crap that he knows will take out these damn bots. Of course, they will also do a damn-damn on his building but with the way the bot swarm is attacking, damage is already being done. So Tony decides that he may as well rack up some bot kills to make him feel better about the pending repair bill.

“Jarvis?”

“None that is visible to my interior cameras sir.”

“However, there may be damage on the outside I can’t see due to the smoke,” Jarvis adds cautiously before continuing, “but fortunately the only interior damage was from a few windows broken earlier.”

No Damage? Tony had counted at least twelve strikes against the building as he approached... And there was no damage?

Tony is so far past amazed, he is now incredulous. Which Tony Stark doesn’t do, you can ask anyone. He’s just glad no one can get a picture of his face right now, because dumbfounded stupidity is not a good look for him. “You’re shitting me right Jarv?” he asks, sliding some fresh missile racks into place so he can pay special attention to Victor the Shit-Head and his Bots of Remodeling Hell.

“No sir, I assure y-- Sir! A doom-bot is targeting Mister Odinson preventing him from re-entering the building!”

“Got it Jarvis.”

“Stark what is Loki doing up on your roof?”

“Ya know, I’m not entirely sure. But if you do a fly over, whatever you do, don’t shoot him. I do not want Loki Daddy or Loki Mommy hunting my head or yours.

OoooO

As soon as the bucket and broom were safely away from the rune, Loki dashed over to the curved face of the building and leaned over the edge. Two stories down the smoke had crawled out onto

Stark's private patio and landing pad and was flowing over the large terrace below it. Admittedly that was what the mist was supposed to do but Loki had worried that it might pool up where the protrusions were and exit off either side leaving areas below unprotected.

Satisfied that the more difficult side of the building was going to be properly protected Loki decided to return to the safety of his floor. He was pleased to see several areas of white haze where energy beams struck the patio. The energy was harmlessly absorbed, strengthening and briefly solidifying the increasingly translucent film left behind as the smoke crawled down the building. Loki smirked as he darted towards the stairwell door. The speed of the smoke's spread indicated that this place had even more ambient energy to work with than he had originally calculated. So much so that it would only be a short time before the visible smoke would vanish and only again become noticeable when dissipating the energy of an attack. At least until it is washed away with the first rain of course or smudged by some twit putting Stark's patio furniture to rights.

Laundry detergent no matter how repulsively dark blue its color, was not exactly what runes were normally painted with. Loki wondered how long it would take Stark to figure out the temporary nature of his Tower's protection. Tucking the mental image of that moment away to savor later, Loki ran around the corner of the stair structure and skidded to a stop, frantically trying to reverse his direction. The concrete rooftop in front of Loki turned milky white, absorbing the energy bolt that the god had just missed running into.

Noticing, but ignoring the numerous other splotches of white appearing on the rooftop, Loki had to make a pivoting dive to dodge the next energy beam lashing out from the strange flying robot. Splinters of concrete exploded from the stair enclosure, a few of them stinging his cheek and drawing blood.

Those could have hit my eye! Damn them all to Niflheim!

Loki was so caught up in his narrow escape from injury it took him a moment to realize that he had been hit by shrapnel. How in the nine had they been able to blast shrapnel off a warded structure?

Loki's heart momentarily stopped. The stair well structure wasn't warded. If those Norn-be-cursed robots blew open that door or tore the roof off the stair structure they would have a clear entry into the whole damn building!

"Jarvis! Jarvis can you hear me!" Loki screamed, running around the small square building pursued by that annoying flying automaton. Coming around the last corner he snatched up the broom he had propped up against the wall earlier. Grabbing it right above the bristle area he paused a beat and then swung with all his might as the robot came around the corner. The stricken machinery flew backwards from the blow and dropped closer to the ground trying to right itself giving Loki an opportunity.

Dropping the broom and crouching down as well, Loki compressed his body like a spring, twisted to anchor his left arm to the ground and kicked up putting all his weight and momentum behind the kick. The side of the bot crumpled and Loki leapt after it, ignoring the now broken bones in his foot, stabbing the end of the boom handle savagely into the newly exposed internal area several times, not stopping until the only movement from the broken robot was the rising of a thin wisp of smoke.

"Mister Odinson! Sir, you have to return to the building now. Sir will take care of these."

"Jarvis. The stairway. It couldn't be included in the warding." Working to maintain a steady breathing pattern, Loki looked around accessing the next threat while twisting the broom head off its handle. "The stairway needs protecting."

“Mister Stark has been informed. Now. Mister Odinson, you need to get back inside the building. Now.”

“Odinson?” Asked a booming voice as a shadow fell upon the roof area.

Glancing up Loki saw a masked figure with grey armor floating perhaps twenty feet up in the air. Loki squinted a bit against the light trying to map its vulnerable areas while the green caped figure came in a bit closer. While the strange wrought iron looking mask hid the creature’s expression, its body language indicated curiosity.

“Loki Odinson, brother of Thor, Comman--” Sirens and speakers on the roof began to blare, drowning out all the other sounds in the area.

“Doom commands you to cease that infernal noise!” Loki heard faintly over the din before Stark blasted into the armored creature, the sound of his approach drowned out by the noise pumping out of Jarvis’ speakers. Stark barreled into the masked figure, catching him around the waist with a crunching noise that was almost more intuited than heard, before sweeping them both over the railings on the side of the building.

The sirens cut out.

“Now Sir,” Jarvis shouted in the sudden ringing silence. “You need to go to your room; those walls are not penetrable by any of the weapons these robots possess.”

The creature knew who I was, Loki thought as he once again darted towards the stairway door.

Loki was about half way there when his heart sank. A robot had taken station in front of the door and his broom handle was back where he had fought the other robot. Loki decided to go with a high flip. If his kick was solid the robot should be deflected enough for him to get into the stairwell and close the door. If it moved to avoid him, he should be close enough to slip into the stairwell anyhow.

And doubtless either would have worked if his ribs hadn’t been smashed into by another robot streaking up and over the side of the building and grabbing him in mid-jump.

Loki’s fighting style made him a formidable opponent even as a mortal, but the strength of that style came from the application of momentum and mass. Neither of which he could use while dangling by one leg upside down. He made a spirited attempt to free himself by kicking with his unrestrained foot, the broken one which hurt like hel every time he moved it and ten times worse when he tried to kick with it, but made himself stop when he rose to a height that would have severely injured or killed him if he fell.

This is all Odin’s fault he swore to himself bitterly, his face screwed up in both emotional and physical pain. If he had access to his powers he could have done any number of things to escape before the wretched thing had ever touched him. If he just had his normal strength he would have torn the damn thing to pieces before it could have risen into the air. Of all the ways he wanted to die this definitely wasn’t one of them.

Of course he couldn’t escape the notion that this might be more of an impromptu kidnapping. A situation he couldn’t imagine having any type of a good outcome. Granted it was much better than dying but the thought of being held prisoner by someone on Midgard that his mother didn’t know was terrifying. Someone who somehow knew him, but did not have anyway of contacting Asgard could only mean he was being kidnapped for reasons other than ransom, and those other reasons were generally painful, or degrading. Or even both, since the lack of ability to contact Asgard did

not only rule out ransom but also political pressure against Odin.

As if that would ever have been a possibility even in the other seven realms he thought sadly. Now had he been Thor, Odin would have torn the realms apart looking for him, but no such effort would be expended for a second prince.

Despairing, Loki saw that they were several cross-roads away from Stark's tower already. Truly the Norns hate me he thought. By the time this stupid robot released him he might well be incapacitated from the broken bones in his foot. Adrenalin had kept him moving on the rooftop while fighting, but all the adrenalin in the world was not going to help him make a dash for freedom with a broken and tissue swollen foot. It was doubtful he would get far hobbling or hopping, already he could feel the abused tissues swelling, making his sports shoe painfully tight. His only hope would be if he could find something to make runes with and either make his escape then or hide the materials somehow before they locked him away or started torturing him. Not that the clothes he was wearing gave him many hiding places, at least not any that would be overlooked when doing prisoner intake. He wondered if the robot was associated with the red haired woman, he wondered—

“Fuck the Norns!” Loki screamed.

Something slammed into the flying robot that was carrying Loki, tossing the captured god into an excruciatingly painful spin. When his trajectory was abruptly changed, Loki's limbs twisted at angles that they weren't designed for. But the pain robbing him of the ability to breathe and causing black spots to cloud his vision was coming from his ankle which had been crushed or badly broken as he was torn from the robot's claw from the force of the initial hit. Loki didn't know why it had happened, but he was sure that his concerns about his broken foot bones making it difficult for him to hobble to freedom was now the least of his mobility worries.

In the middle of an internal rant again the Norns in general and Odin in particular, another problem forcibly brought itself to Loki attention.

He was falling.

“Marvelous,” he moaned as the air streamed around him, whistling louder as his tumbling fall accelerated. He didn't even have a jacket on to try to wind-ride with.

It was impossible to see where he was while tumbling. He could be falling towards a building roof or a street not that it made much difference. Either would kill him. He knew he wasn't yet between any buildings. Even through the black spots in his vision, Loki could tell there was way too much blue for that, but he couldn't focus on anything long enough to make sense of it. Loki tried desperately to assume a freefall position, but he couldn't due to the pressure of the wind pushing against his strained and torn muscles. Screaming with pain and cursing his luck he tried several times to flatten out but he couldn't get his arms and legs to cooperate long enough to achieve any kind of a stable position. He would no sooner reach near stability when one of his damaged arms or legs would give way due to the pressure of the air flow and he would again be painfully twisted as air pressure tossed him back into a rotating mess.

After several attempts, Loki curled into as tight a ball as he could. He was still tumbling, but at least while he was curled up in a ball he was dropping straight down without the painful twisting and pulling of his damaged arms and legs.. He was going to die on Midgard having never again spoken to his mother or brother so it really didn't make much difference what position he was in when he finally struck something solid.

He wasn't crying, Æsir warriors didn't blubber like children when thinking about their families. It

was only the pain of his injuries causing tears to escape his tightly closed eyes to be whipped away by the wind.

Chapter End Notes

If you are absolutely not a commenting kind of person, please bookmark or Kudo, it really help the story placement in the search engine and is much appreciated.

And many, many thanks to Beta's Mima Mai and Wildbearies since I couldn't have got here with out you!

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Bruce or Fury?

Chapter Summary

Loki's been falling an awful long time.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

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The tower is attacked and Loki decides to ensure his own safety. He may be without his powers, but he isn't totally powerless ya know. Except for the fact that Doom heard Jarvis refer to him as 'Odinson' and sent a doom bot to snag him. With no powers and an already broken foot Loki was starting to get a little worried. Then something stuck the doom bot causing his ankle to be crushed right as he was torn out of it grip to fall to his certain death.

Okay....So it has been longer than six to eight weeks. But in my defense I did have the perfect storm of computer issues, email server issues, Beta disappearance issues, cross country trip issues and a two week bout of extreme laziness. Also this bridge section ballooned into nineteen chapters from an expected 30k to frickin' 88k. Are they all good words? I have no idea but damn if I didn't type the bastards so they're staying and I am just going to have to hope they don't drag too much.

I'm currently planning on posting twice a week. However if there is enough interest I daresay I could be persuaded to update faster.

Groaning, Tony pushed himself away from the perimeter wall where he had finally slammed to a stop and rolled painfully onto his back. His armored hands collapsed across his chest before he finally, painfully lifted his right hand enough to open his face plate. “Jarvis.” He gasped. “I really, really hate...” Unable to hold it up anymore, his hand fell back down to his chest, “really hate Victor Von Fucking Doom.” Tony took in several deep breaths before continuing. “Could you block me out a day next week so I could dedicate some serious time to hating him?”

“Friday is currently empty. Would that be acceptable sir?” Jarvis asked.

Blinking, Tony waved a gauntleted hand in a lazy circle to facilitate his thought process. “Friday’s good.”

“Excellent sir, I will place that on your calendar. Baring of course the possibility that Mister Odinson might still be requiring medical care that day.”

FUCK!

Tony shot dizzily up into a sitting position looking around wildly.

“Jarvis where is he? Please tell me he didn’t slide under a railing or bounce over a parapet or anything,” Tony demanded frantically.

“No sir,” Jarvis said in a soothing voice. “Whereas you bounced and slid, Mister Odinson ‘splatted’ so to speak and then rolled a short way.”

“Fuck!”

“Tony! You all right? What happened, you just cut out on us there,” Bruce called.

Tony took a quick look at his status screen. After rebooting his suit his readiness wasn’t perfect of course. Especially not with the pounding and the crappy landing he’s just done, but Tony’s had worse damage and continued to fight. “I’m hanging in there Bruce. Who’s on Doom?”

“Nobody. You guys blasted each other and he just dropped down and disappeared. I was personally hoping he had continued down to become asphalt performance art, but no such luck. Ground spotters said he just disappeared about fifteen stories before he would have hit the pavement.”

Tony could hear Bruce making a muffled request before he continued, “We got one bot left, Clint got a shot at it and he and Steve are checking to see that it stays down.”

Tony climbed to his feet with a complete lack of grace. The suit might be poetry in motion in the air, but its maneuverability left a lot to be desired when starting out from the prone position. “Hang on one minute Bruce. I need to check on my guest, he’s injured.”

“Injured? How? Was your building hit that bad?” Bruce asked in a troubled voice. “What about--”

Clint overrode whatever else Bruce had been about to ask. “Hey Stark, if he’s dead, pizza’s on me tonight.”

“Fuck off Barton. If he’s dead I’m giving Thor a copy of you saying that.”

“Yeah, yeah. Whatever. So is the fucker dead or what?”

Grimacing at the underlying viciousness in Clint's voice, Tony looked around. Where the hell was Loki?

"Sir, if you would check by the mechanical area, Mister Odinson is there."

Hoping for a miracle, but not really expecting one Tony crept around towards the low wall surrounding the AC condensers.

Limbs were twisted in ways that they shouldn't be able to bend. Loki was mostly on his back and one of his hands was half lifted, half supported by his chest and shaking. The god's hand movements were small and erratic and as Tony got closer he could see the god's mouth shuddering with half broken breaths and half silent moans. Loki's eyes were screwed shut in pain and tears were rolling down his cheeks, leaving little streaks of clean skin in the mess of his face before soaking into his blood matted hair.

"Aw fuck. This is bad. Bruce I see bone. And things pointing in directions they shouldn't be. And blood. Lots and lots of blood. Tony's knees gave way and he dropped right in front of Loki.

"Oh hell Rudolf, please don't die."

"Stay calm Tony, we'll be right there." Bruce said soothingly, and Tony heard him call out to the pilot to head to Stark Tower immediately.

"The hell you will! Banner you will not divert that aircraft. Stark, there are other priorities than your injured house pet," snarled Fury.

Tony was speechless. Surely Fury was not going to pick this moment to be the world's biggest asshole.

"Unless of course you want us to take over for you?" Fury asked in what Tony thought had to be the most barefaced and transparent power grab attempt that the billionaire had ever witnessed. "I have a SHIELD medical team in the area that I can divert to you immediately. They could be there in less than five minutes."

So the answer to that question was, yes. Yes, Fury was going to be the world's biggest asshole.

"You listen to me Cyclops. I want that QuinJet here now. Not in ten minutes, now." Tony demanded harshly, disengaging his right gauntlet.

"We're coming Tony don't worry. Three more minutes tops," Bruce's said in a comforting voice, pitched exactly right to get Tony's heart to slow down from the insanely over-clocked speed it is running at. "But one thing Tony, there is no way I can do anything for him. If it's as bad as you say it is, he's going to need a trauma team and some orthopedic specialists. He needs to go to a real hospital."

"The HELL you say." Fury retorted. "If you want medical care for someone that isn't even supposed to be here, he'll get it at a secure facility or the fucker can do without!"

"Where Bruce?" Tony asked hoarsely. While waiting for Bruce to reply he reached out a shaky hand, laying two fingers right below the god's ear. Loki's pulse was weak and erratic.

"Well... St. Barnabas Hospital in the Bronx?"

"What the hell Stark? The Bronx? What did they ever do to you?"

Ignoring the archer Tony asked, “Why there Bruce?”

“Trust me Tony. I volunteer at their outreach clinic once in a while. They have a wonderful Trauma and Orthopedic program, its only about six miles from you and the two closer hospital’s that could handle this are going to be busy with the fallout from Doom’s little rampage.

“That is not going to happen. Stark, I’m sending Romanoff over with a helicopter; we’ll transfer him to a secure SHIELD medical facility.”

“Bring it on Bruce. Jarvis private.” Tony ordered. As soon as he heard the privacy chime Tony started issuing instructions. “Tell Happy where we are headed. I want him personally on this. He knows the drill.”

“Indeed he does sir. As often as you have been in the hospital I would be surprised if he didn’t.”

“Yeah well there is that. How’s Pep? You give her the all clear yet?”

“Yes sir. The building maintenance crew should be able to handle preliminary repairs of the damage that was actually done to the building. As soon as the supervisor checks the frames for damages, the crews can be scheduled for permanent repairs.”

“Good. Let her know I’m alright but tell her I am going to be busy with Loki for a while. Oh and call the hospital and let them know we’re coming and that Happy will be there soon.”

“I’ll take care of everything sir. I am sure it will be alright, Mister Odinson is a resilient young man.”

“Resilient maybe Jarv, I’m not so sure about the young part though,” Tony replied absently, his mind already triaging the possible choices and pitfalls that he might be dealing with in the next few hours.

OoooO

Being responsible sucked as far as Tony is concerned. He would give anything to hand the god off to Bruce or Pepper or anyone else to deal with and go drown himself in the bottom of a bottle. Or his lab perhaps. Ah, better, his lab and a big bottle of forgetfulness... And maybe a few cheeseburgers thrown in for good measure.

But no.

Instead Tony was experiencing the pissed off dread known to every parent in the world who has ever had to deal with a kid who has carelessly almost killed themselves. Panic of course because he is going to be responsible for making some pretty important medical care decisions in the next few hours as Loki’s ‘Guardian of Record’ and hell what if he doesn’t make the right calls? Pissed because a bad case of ‘Why Me’ was settling in to stay. Hell, it’s had already had mail redirected his way and had a cable installation scheduled.

No sooner had Tony gone back live on the com, Fury started hounding him again about moving Loki to a secure hospital instead of a public one where his presence might cause a panic.

“No. You know what Nick? Not going to happen. I’m taking him to a real hospital. One that won’t perform any unnecessary tests... oh excuse me, ‘exams’ on him. One that will actually discharge him when he is well and not try to lock him in a dungeon until the second coming of Christ.” Tony snapped as he removed his other gauntlet and clipped both of them to the utility catch on his suit.

“Oh and Nickie baby? The only way that Lorin Othinsson is going to cause any kind of a panic is if some fucker from SHIELD opens their big mouth. You might want to send around a memo that if that does happen I will spend the rest of my days making sure their life turns into a stolen identity hell. With maybe a few dozen lawsuits on top of it that their great grandchildren will still be dealing with. That goes double for whatever fuckers on high authorized it, since we all know your SHIELD drones don’t take a shit without permission from a supervisor.

“Are you threatening me Stark?” Fury growled over the com.

“Hey, I know me and Bruce are the only geniuses in the general area right now, but I was kinda hoping you could recognize a threat without me spelling it out for you. Once again it seems I’ve over estimated your uptake skills Nick.”

“Tony are you sure that will be safe for the other patients?” Steve asked quietly over the com, obviously trying to break up the pissing contest between Tony and Fury.

“Positive Stars and Stripes. Now if everyone could just fuck off for a few hours and leave me alone so I can concentrate I would really appreciate it.”

There were a lot of other things that Tony would have appreciated. Loki not screaming in agony when they transferred him to the stretcher was one of them. Loki passing out again would have been another one. But sadly Tony’s luck was totally used up by the time the QuinJet arrived. Many of the crew had first aid rescue training, thank you Jesus, and had decided that a happy Bruce Banner was way more important to their immediate personal health, than any orders that Fury was occasionally screaming over the com at them.

Any other scraps of luck Tony might have had rolling around in his pocket wasn’t enough to keep the just revived, disoriented Loki from screaming for his mother.

The only thing that allowed Tony to keep his man card, since he was tearing-up like an emo pre-teen, was the fact that the QuinJet’s co-pilot who was built like a shaved grizzly bear and most likely was aware of Loki’s real identity was also surreptitiously wiping tears away as he helped load the god into the jet.

It was just fucking heart-breaking listening as Loki brokenly promised to be better in the future and as he begged her to help him.

In hindsight it would have been better for all of them if Loki had started screaming for that Heimdall dude. But that was something it would take a few days for Tony to realize.

OoooO

Tony had Bruce accompany ‘Lorin’, who was now having almost silent crying jags, into the emergency trauma triage area. He warned Bruce not to let the god out of his sight for even a minute, and reminded him that his name was Lorin.

Recognizing Bruce from his work at the hospital’s charity clinic, the intake clerk just called out a room number. She told him that they had received a call, obviously from Jarvis, and that the Stevenson trauma team was en route. She waved for Tony to come with her to get the admittance procedures started. The first snag they ran into was the fact that neither Tony nor Loki had any identification on them. So okay. He did look like Tony Stark and they had received a call alerting them that he was on his way, but the hospital had no way of knowing for sure. Finally Tony just had Jarvis fax over a copy of his driver’s license. Totally on his own initiative, Jarvis also sent Lorin’s ID and insurance information.

Who the fuck knew that Loki had health insurance? Tony certainly hadn't. While waiting for the printer to spit out all the forms that he was going to have to sign Tony wondered if the god was going to be eligible for Worker's Comp. After all the injury had happened at his work site, during his normal shift. How freaky would that be?

While signing the shit load of consent and guarantee forms, Tony managed to salt enough comments about his brave, but not very bright little employee who got trapped inadvertently in the midst of a bunch of Doom-bots and was hurt fighting them off with a broom handle. The sad fact was that there was enough freaky shit like that going on in New York at any given time that it was a case of same shit different day as far as the admissions lady was concerned. Once the clerk was sure that this wasn't a 'criminal' assault or something she had to notify the police over, she dismissed it and continued to plow through the forms. Apparently 'Super Villain' assaults just got logged and turned over to the CDC on their Preparedness and Response form once a month.

Who knew?

At any rate, Tony soon finished signing everything she wanted and after letting her take a 'selfie' of the two of them he managed to escape in time to follow Bruce and the trauma team up to the surgery floor. And with Bruce's help, despite all the protests Tony put on a different kind of suit and followed them into the operating room.

After several long tiring hours in surgery and checking with Bruce to make sure he could assist for the next few days, Tony tried to get the scientist to go and rest.

"Bruce, buddy, you need to get some sleep. Let me have Jarvis get you a hotel room so you can be close by okay?"

"What about you?" Bruce asked examining Tony closely. Tony looked exhausted but alert. From the skeptical look on Bruce's face Tony knew that he suspected that the engineer had downed more than a cup or two of coffee the minute they got out of the operating room. In actuality it was only two cups, because that Tony could manage before the recovery room people arrived to pick up Loki. He thanked the heavens that there was a coffee pot in the recovery room's nursing station and that his celebrity status and more importantly his good buddy pass courtesy of Bruce, allowed him to sneak another cup.

"Just go Bruce, I'm good. And Happy and a few of the guys are going to stay with me. I'll stay with Lo in recovery and you come spell me back at his room when you wake up in the morning?"

And amazingly that wasn't a lie. Tony did feel good; he's was all peppy from chugging so much coffee and more relieved than he would have thought possible. His charge has a long recovery ahead of him, but nothing was permanently damaged. Sure bones were pinned together and the poor guy has more stitches than a needle point canvas, but it could have been so much worse.

"I can do that," Bruce agreed. "But don't worry about Jarvis finding me a room in this area. Honestly there aren't any close, so the hospital has a couple of crash pads for doctors to use right across the street in their community clinic. I've stayed there a couple of times before. I'll be fine Tony, just call me if you need me."

"Bruce is a really great guy," Tony later confided to the still heavily anesthetized god in the bed beside him.

OoooO

It turns out that in the long run, Tony didn't have to rely on Happy or one of the SI security guards

to help him stay awake. Just as soon as Loki was transferred from the surgical recovery room to the Intensive Care Unit, Tony got a massive adrenaline jolt when Steve and Natasha showed up with the intent to take over the guarding of 'Lorin'.

That totally woke Tony straight the fuck up.

Fortunately Happy and Pepper had already smoothed his path. Hospital security was aware that they had a very politically important incognito guest. And for being so accommodating, the Saint Barnabas Board of Directors and its Administrators were also aware that they would be receiving a portion of the money collected at next spring's Stark International Fund Raiser. So between Stark International muscle, the selectively briefed medical staff and the hospital security crew they were able to keep the duo from SHIELD from actually entering the ICU.

Which was not to say that it wasn't much fun for all concerned for several long minutes. Everyone involved was playing 'My Cojones Are Bigger Than Yours', with Natasha naturally winning.

Big surprise there huh?

Not that it did Nat any good in the long run since the hospital transport team with a freshly gowned Happy as a ringer had slid Tony and Loki right through the mess. Happy's crew knew that Tony's wishes trumped anything that didn't have a court order attached to it, so his SI security hung tough. The hospital security chief knew there was a huge donation for the hospital if this visit went smoothly and he didn't want his department to be the one that screwed that up. Plus Happy had promised that the more accommodating members of the hospital staff would be eligible for 'on the sly' bonuses.

Since neither Natasha nor Steve wanted to start a brawl in the hospital they never had a chance.

After Loki was transferred to a bed and wired six ways from Sunday, Tony left Happy to stand guard over the god while Tony stepped out of Loki's room. Never taking his hand off the huge door he waved the various security people out of hearing range so he and the SHIELD contingent could scream at each other at the top of their whispers.

Well okay, Tony scream-whispered, Natasha threatened-whispered and poor Steve just tried to placate-whisper, which was not as much help as Steve obviously thought it would be. At any rate Tony threatened them with all kinds of dire consequences if they did anything to make the hospital staff think that that 'Lorin' was a criminal being kept under observation.

Even if he was.

Then Tony ducked back into the room and left them to the tender mercies of Nurse Ratchet's crankier sister Cruella. Natasha and Steve might be a world class assassin and a super hero, but they were no match for the head nurse of an ICU unit. She shoo'd them out of the unit and away from its door, making them sit in an alcove further down the hall. An alcove furnished of course with those uncomfortable chairs common to all hospital waiting areas.

Cruella had tried to shoo Tony out for the night too, but Happy had managed to have a word with the Director of Nursing so Tony and the sterile disposable surgical gown covering his autoclave wrinkled hospital scrubs and stylish sterile blue shoe booties got to stay in Loki's room while two of Happy's people took turns watching outside in the main hall keeping an eye on SHIELD's own version of Merry & Pippin for him. And that rat bastard Happy and his third minion headed down to the private room being reserved for Loki's room on the Ortho Ward. After they got done checking it out and setting it up to conform to Tony's hospital stay protocols, they would take turns sleeping in an almost real bed, not some fricking station chair that Happy had stolen for Tony from

the Doctor's chart room. Not that Tony slept.

"You know Sport, you've got Natasha sitting out there waiting on you," Tony told the sleeping god while sucking down the gazillionth cup of coffee he'd sweet talked out of the nurses. "Nat's all kinds of dark and deadly and looking out of place in her high boots, tight jeans and molded on leather coat." No doubt hiding all kinds of weapons that were prohibited by the hospital, he was sure.

"And of course we got Capt'n Spangles looking like a reject from the Happy Days set. And not even a cool reject like someone trying to imitate the Fonz, more like a nerdy Potsie Webber reject. I shudder to think what the hospital staff is making of all this. You haven't met him in this life time yet, but I'm sure you'll dislike him the minute you do. He's kinda like your brother, blonde and muscles with flashing blue eyes and all. And not unlike your brother he also has a stick rammed up his ass." Tony mulled over that last statement for a minute, "And not the fun kind either. Steve has the sanctimonious model."

OoooO

Tony even being in the room during non-visiting hours was getting on the staff's last nerve. Especially when they wanted him to leave so they could flush drains, pack incisions and other nurse-ly crap like that. So he decided not to push his luck by having an obviously germ ridden tablet or laptop brought up to him. His phone had been banished from the Operating Room and was bundled in his street clothes currently in Bruce's care. Sad that he had forgotten to retrieve it he tried to entertain himself. Mostly by talking to Loki or 'Lo' as Tony had decided to call him so he didn't slip up or be overheard by the wrong person.

"I'll tell you Lo, I can't wait until we get you down to a regular room. And not just because I want a bathroom to use instead of that damn plastic urinal thing I found in your little hospital swag bag. I know, gross huh. Don't worry, I'll get you a new one later but I wasn't about to leave you even to use the staff's restroom. Assuming 'Attila the Nurse' would have let me of course. Hell, you'd think they'd never seen a urinal bottle before. I hung it in the trash can for them; it's not like I made a mess or anything.

I mean you've got your tube and all; you weren't going to use the damn thing. Which I totally hate when I've had to have one... A tube I mean... And when they take it out? Cripes you just want to kick someone, or at least I did. Kick someone that is. Dumb orderly pulled it out like he was trying to start an outboard motor." Unseen by Loki, Tony's face scrunched up in remembered pain. "He was lucky I only kicked him. I wanted to shoot him, the bastard. But hey, I owe you, so I'll try to get you a pretty nurse to do it instead of an Igor. And we will definitely ask her to go slow. Fuck man, with all the damage you saved my building, I'll even see if she's up for a happy ending."

Tony softly patted Loki's blanket covered right shin, the one not in the traction rig. "Don't worry buddy, I've got your back, I'll explain what a 'Happy Ending' is so you don't freak out and bust your stitches or anything." Tony stopped talking suddenly and stared at Loki's hand for a minute. He could have sworn it had just— And it did, move that is. Tony looked up at the god's battered and bandaged face to see Loki's eyelids fluttering.

"Lo?" Tony gently wrapped his fingers around the god's twitching fingers. Loki's fingers tightened around his and the god gave a small tug.

Frowning Tony stood up and still holding the injured man's fingers he moved up to stand by Loki's shoulder, brushing a lock of hair off the god's swollen cheek. "Lo? You awake yet buddy?"

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

What? No flowers?

Chapter Summary

Tony bedside manner isn't horrible... But it does need some work.

Chapter Notes

The last chapter received so many lovely comments that I was compelled... Compelled mind you, to post another. Keep this up and I have to do them daily for crying out loud. :D

You guys all rock!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 31 – What? No flowers?

Pain. Gut wrenching pain.

Loki drifted in and out of agony with every breath of air. His lips were split and his dry tongue seemed to be stuck to the roof of his mouth. Something hard was jammed painfully into his nose and trying to lift his hand to remove it caused waves of agony to shoot through his arm and chest. But those were the most trivial of concerns compared to the persistent throbbing, stabbing, aching pains that covered the rest of his body even when he lay perfectly still. How was he even injured like this? It had been centuries since he been this badly hurt. Not since he had mastered his Seiðr in fact.

The pain that topped them all however was the pounding agony in his head. He felt like Thor had cracked his skull with Mjölfnir and each wave of pressure threatened to split his head completely open. He felt tears of pain burn his dry eyes and then trickle down the side of his face. What had Thor gotten them into this time?

Loki heard someone moan. Thankfully it didn't sound like Thor or any of his idiot friends, so he supposed when they were finished with their 'glorious' battle they might spare a moment to come and look for him. The pressure in his head receded momentarily but then the nausea inducing pain covering the rest of his body pushed to the forefront for a few moments causing a sour copper taste to flood into his mouth. The pain and nausea came in waves, one then the other every minute or two. If he held his breath he could get a brief respite, but as soon as he had to breathe the whole vicious cycle started over again. He was pretty sure that Thor was going to get smacked by mother several times over this. Stupid Thor and his reckless behavior. He was always dragging them into trouble. And he never... Ever... Listened, or at least not until he had created a huge mess he wanted Loki to fix.

After an eternity, between the various waves of pain, Loki began to notice other that he seemed to have been laying here for a really long time. If Thor had forgotten him again while he chased after fleeing foes he was going to turn the stupid bastard into a pig. What felt like a week or so later,

Loki became aware that he was laying with his head slightly raised in a bed with a hard mattress. So he was not on the battlefield anywhere while he waited for a field healing. The bed wasn't comfortable enough to be his own, which made sense, because if he was home he would have already been either cured or in the middle of a healing coma not knowing what bed he was in.

However as hard as the mattress was, it was far superior to anything he would have been granted if he'd been captured. He heard more moaning. Loki didn't know what had happened but he hoped a healer came by soon. Right now he would settle for one of Thor's oafish friends and the much more rough and ready healing stones. Even if they just took the edge off the pain by healing some of his more pressing injuries.

The other thing that he couldn't avoid noticing every time that he swam up from unconsciousness, was the incessant babbling of the man sitting near him that was clearly audible even over the various strange beeping and swishing noises.

Loki shifted his eyes a tiny bit to see a brunette with a scruffy beard looking down at him.

"Are you never quiet?" Loki asked in a slurring mumble.

OoooO

"Alright you're awake."

Loki's pain clouded, barely opened eyes rolled to regard the man standing beside him.

"Are you never quiet?" he slurred trying not to move his split lips too much, not wanting to add even that minor discomfort to his other accumulated pains.

Wonder of wonders the man actually shut up.

Loki hates Thor. He hates Thor's idiot friends, he hates Odin and he hates this stupid mortal standing beside him. He wants his mother, why isn't she here? Closing his eyes tightly, Loki hissed in another painful breath and felt stinging tears leak down the sides of his face.

"Lo if I could get in touch with your mother, I hope you know I'd do it in a heartbeat." Said the voice, and Loki felt gentle fingers brushing the damp hair at his temple.

While he still didn't move a muscle that he didn't have to, Loki's eyes slammed open and he stared in horror at the tangle of bright metal track suspended directly above him and bits of understanding clicked into place.

The man beside him was Stark. He was on Midgard. His mother was never ever going to come. He rolled horrified eyes to the side and saw Stark give him a one sided smile that was more of a grimace than anything else.

"Buddy, you bitch about me, but you haven't shut up since you came out from under the anesthesia. If you're not sleeping or moaning, you're talking." Stark bent down leaning on the bed rails, his eyes now lit in gentle good humor that transformed his grimace into a real smile. "I'm not sure if it is the pain meds they have you on or just how miserable you must be feeling, but we've had this same conversation half a dozen times."

Loki screwed his eyes shut in mortification causing the tears of pain that had pooled there to spill out.

"Hey, no. It's okay. I mean it's not like I was unaware that you thought I was a mortal twit. Let me see... You'll be glad to know that Thor didn't leave you behind... Again. How often has he done

that by the way? Never mind. Not important right now. Oh, and I agree with your assessment of your father by the way. I mean I don't know him personally, but I still agree. I don't know who Adis is either, but she sounds really hot. And if I knew what a healing stone was I'd order you a dozen of them... Because buddy I don't think I need to tell you how fucked up you are right now. Trust me, I wish more than anything I could get your mother down here right now... And no, I will never shut up. I'm just not capable of being quiet."

Loki resolved to just die. Right here, right now. While the last several hours have been hazy... The bits and pieces of thoughts that Loki can remember from between the waves of pain, range from mildly embarrassing to frankly pathetic. He unwisely tried to shake away the image he must be presenting and was caught in the midst of another wave of agony.

"Fuck!" Loki hears Stark open up a door and then call out, "Hey! Can I get someone down here please?" After a moment he feels someone take his hand, squeezing on it gently. "I'll have the nurse get you something else for pain okay? Umm, is there anything else I can get for you?"

Robbed of breath by the last surge of pain Loki made the mistake of allowing himself to gasp for air. A big mistake. The previous pain was a lover's caress compared to what he is experiencing now. How a knife was shoved into his chest he has no idea, he just knows that Stark is somehow back with him, holding Loki's hand tight while gently cupping a cool hand on the side of his face.

"Shusss, the nurse is coming. Don't worry, I'm right here." Tony said softly. "We'll fix it I promise. My doctor will be here first thing this morning."

Loki can't find it within himself to even open his eyes, breathing as shallowly as he can and willing himself not to move a muscle, he hears Stark's voice whispering his name over and over again, talking constantly as Loki feels more tears leak out from under his eyelids while shallow breaths hiss between his teeth.

As he rolls in and out of consciousness he hears Stark's low comforting rumble, someone moaning and the never ending swish-beep noises in the background.

After an eternity Stark's voice sharpens angrily. In between comforting mutters addressed to Loki, of how it will all be fine don't worry, Stark snaps at a healer, accusing of her of being lax in the performance of her duties. Two eternities later a strange female voice badgers him asking him who he is and when is his birthday before Stark begins a hissing argument with her. He feels heat running up the inside of his arm and Stark's fingers softly brushing hair away from his damp temples. Then blessedly clouds descend blocking Loki's mind from the pain in his body.

OoooO

"Lok-"

Tony paused, irritated at himself that he kept forgetting to call Loki by his safer nickname. "Lo, don't worry it will be all right. Shhhh, the nurse is coming. Don't worry, I'm right here." Tony said softly.

Tony was tired, stressed and feeling like six kinds of nasty. He'd been overdue for bed and hadn't exactly been 'Daisy Fresh' when the alert was called and then he'd spent a couple of hours working up a sweat in the suit. Granted the surgical scrubs had been steam fixed wrinkle sterile when he put them on, but they hadn't come with a change of underwear or socks... So he was still wearing his original ones, which were now of course filthy beyond belief.

Tony would kill for a shower. Oooo or better? A several hour long nap in his super deep, super

large Japanese soaker tub, temp cranked up as high as it could go.

Tony's teeth currently have enough fur on them that they almost require a visit to a dog salon for grooming, his breath stinks so bad he's offending himself and he knows from his reflection in some of the shinier equipment that his hair is a sweat stiff, tangled, rats-nest of a mess. So if the engineer lets out his own little moan of longing he refuses to feel bad about it. If he can't help but imagine how good it would feel to soak his tired back muscles while getting clean and maybe taking a quick nap at the same time who could blame him. Especially since it is totally do-able. Tony has had enough injuries of his own that he designed a harness-slash-pillow arrangement so he won't drown in the deep tub if he falls asleep while soaking sore muscles.

Another low groan pulled Tony back to trying to soothe Loki by talking to him calmly and stroking the only place he knew for sure wasn't injured on the broken god. Tony's conscience nagged at him a bit for whining about being a bit ripe. Because even if he didn't verbalize his whining... In the grand scheme of things no matter how crappy Tony feels at least he isn't the one in traction. Nor was he dealing with torn muscles, screws in his ankle, broken bones in his foot, dislocations and multiple lacerations. Well yeah, in a way he was dealing with them for his pet deity, but not 'dealing dealing' with them as injuries to his own body. So he needs to pull on his big boy pants and just shut up already.

"Shhhh, Lo we'll fix it I promise. My doctor will be here first thing this morning."

He better fucking be on his way right now, the bastard was on very generous retainer should have roused his ass here last night. As soft as his whispered words to Loki are, Tony's thoughts were sharp and vicious and if he had been verbalizing them they would contain more than a little bit of a sibilant component.

Tony felt like this night was fucking never going to end. Well technically it was morning right now, but even if there was a window to look out of, which there isn't, it's so early that it would still be dark out. Tony knows this from the clock on the wall that he has been obsessively checking every five seconds or so. As far as Tony is concerned it is still the night from hell no matter what that damn clock might say. Tony just hoped Bruce got here before his doctor did. And both of them better god damn well be here before the surgeon made his rounds. If not they would find out that Bruce was not the only person who could Hulk out.

Loki is sleeping or passed out or comatose or whatever the hell he is when he is quiet. Tony can tell he is sleeping because Loki talks, mumbles and emits strangled tea kettle background noises pretty much the whole time he's awake. Not that Tony will get much of a break, since the guy only sleeps for fifteen minutes or so before something makes him groan like the front door of Dracula's castle and he all starts over again.

But since the trickster seems to have dropped off for a few minutes, Tony with a small groan of his own takes a break from the hair stroking which seems to be the only thing that lowers the volume and calms the god.

While rotating his shoulders and trying to work out all the pins and needles he has from resting his forearm on the bed's metal side rail Tony wonders if Thor has a hair fetish too? He's seen the few photos SHIELD had of Thor's buddies in New Mexico and with the exception of Errol Flynn they all were rocking the longer locks.

It's involuntary but Tony can't help rolling his eyes and making a face at the remembrance of Errol's completely over the top theatrical facial hair. That is nothing, thank you Barton, like Tony's own well groomed look. No matter how much Steve laughed when Tony told him that.

And then Tony's night started to go bad. Yeah he had thought it was bad before, but no, this is really bad. The nurses in this damn hospital move like snails and they are totally jacking him off.

Tony alternates between trying to keep his temper in check so he can try sooth Loki while bitching into the intercom because the nurses are ignoring him. Ignoring him. Ignoring Tony Stark.

Tony is pissed at Doom for attacking his building. Pissed at Jarvis for letting Loki out of his safe area. Pissed at the nurses for ignoring him. Pissed at Bruce for not being here and *not* reminding Tony to take his phone back. And pissed at Happy for not snatching a phone off one of his SI minions and giving it to Tony. He'd be mad at himself for accepting the job of keeping one Norse God of Mischief, except that Tony never blames himself, he blames Pepper. That's why he hired her in the first place to have someone to blame when stuff goes wrong or he ignores something. Except of course for those exceedingly rare times when it is entirely his fault, which is also why he hired Pepper. Not only will Pepper make him see the error of his ways... She will also fix whatever fuck up he just made.

So where the hell is Pepper? She should be fixing this! Tony's angry mental tirade is interrupted by the long awaited arrival of a nurse.

"What the fuck took you so long? Is this fucking ICU or just a post-surgical parking lot? Is anyone even looking at his monitor feed?!"

"Mister Stark please lower your voice. I'm here now what did you need?"

"Fuck what I need! Did you bring him something for pain? I could have sworn that's what I asked for over the intercom. Well? Are you just going to stand there looking stupid or are you going to give him something?"

It took for freaking ever for the nurse to return with a med tray, some crap about checking with the doctor to see if she could give him something stronger, which she apparently can't until his ass makes it in to do a post-op check on Loki.

"Could you wake up a moment please," the nurse asks in a penetrating voice while lightly tapping Loki on his good cheek. "I need you to tell me your name and birthday please."

For a second Tony was side tracked by the idea of learning exactly how old the trickster actually was, then Loki woke with painful start. Hissing at the pain that this an involuntary movement caused him, it took the god a minute to calm his ragged breathing.

"Sir, I need you to verify your name and birthday please," The woman said again, turning the yellow plastic id band on his wrist so that the information printed there was visible to her.

Loki closed his eyes, brows furrowed in pain.

"Sir, can you answer me?"

"Are you fucking kidding me? What part of English is not his first language did you not see on the charts?"

"I am sorry Mister Stark it is standard procedure to get positive identification before administering medications, especially narcotics."

In his current state, Tony did not want Loki to 'A' have to put up with this shit one more moment than he had to... And 'B' not say anything that might tie him to Thor or get them into an explanation of who Loki of Asgard was and why he was on earth.

“So you have to speak English before you can get your medicine?” Tony snapped.

While she didn’t exactly roll her eyes, Nurse Wilkes did do the ‘Modified Eye Movement of Disdain’ that was all that those who worked with the public were allowed. “Sir, I do have to verify to make sure his identification matches his wrist identification bracelet, it is a quality control measure.” Just as Tony opened up his mouth to retort she continued as if he hadn’t been about to blast her. “Also it allows us to ascertain our patient’s mental state and level of coherence.”

“Don’t make me move him to a private hospital, ‘cause I swear to Christ if I have to do that I will buy this dump and fire the lot of you.” Tony hissed, his voice lower, but not one whit less angry.

“His name is Lorin Othinsson, I have no idea when his birthday is but I’m sure my Director of Personnel could look it up for us when she gets in this morning. He works for me. He is in acute pain.” Loki let out a moan, the timing of which could not have been better if they had rehearsed it. “And if you don’t give him something for that pain immediately I may get a little testy. And trust me lady, you haven’t seen me testy yet.” Tony had come around the bed and was standing right in front of her, practically toe to toe.

“Give him. The damn. Shot.” He demanded.

“Hi guys. Is there a problem?”

Tony spun around. “Bruce, you know I love you, don’t you?” He exclaimed hurrying over to where a slightly ruffled, but much rested Bruce was standing. Tony had felt on the verge of going crazy if he had to deal with one more damn thing. But now Bruce was here, and he could deal with the medical morons. He wrapped his hand around Bruce’s upper arm and dragged him over to the bed where Loki was again making his little tea kettle hisses.

“Bruce, please make her give him the pain med before I have to buy this dump. Pleaaaaaassseeee.” The billionaire whined.

“Tony just sit back down,” Bruce gently pushed him towards the vacant chair and looked at the information written on the whiteboard posted by the bed. “Carol? Hi, Bruce Banner. I work across the street in the clinic sometimes. Doctor Stevenson and Doctor Vaslin, Mister Stark’s personal physician are down in the doctor’s lounge talking, they’ll be up here in a few minutes.” He took in Loki’s stained features and ragged breathing. “I think perhaps if you gave Mister... Othinsson his shot now it might have time to take the edge off his pain before they get done reviewing his file.

The nurse looked at Tony and then down at the identification band that had started the ruckus before looking back to Bruce.

“Please,” Bruce asked in that Yoga-master calm voice of his.

Since Loki had started moaning again, Tony started stroking his hair and talking to him again to try and cut short any complaints the god might make that the nurse could over hear. If a little god petting kept him from having to make hard explanations, he was totally up for it.

So Tony sat there, stroking Loki’s hair and repeatedly telling ‘Lo’ everything will be okay, thanking him for helping to protect his tower and Pepper, assuring him that the doctors were on their way up to see him and apologizing for being a sucky bedside companion who should have called the slow assed, know nothing, useless fucking nurse twenty minutes earlier.

Just because Tony was listening to Bruce that didn’t mean his normal passive aggressive personality had taken the day off. Quite the opposite in fact.

Throwing Tony a dark look, the nurse finally shoved a needle into Loki's IV line and injected some pain meds into the solution. Tony bared his teeth at her in what could be called a smile... Maybe... If you were totally clueless. Bruce just sighed loudly and asked the nurse if he could speak to her in private for a moment.

"Odin did this to me..." Loki was muttering sadly to Tony as Bruce quietly re-entered the room. The god's eyes fluttered half open, showing a muddy olive shade where they had previously been clear emerald.

It took a minute but Tony knew when Loki finally registered Bruce's presence.

"Hey--," Bruce paused and tried again. Hello... Lorin?"

Confused Loki looked to Tony who nodded. Loki's tongue flicked out to lick his split and swollen lips. "Banner."

"So... Lorin. The surgeon should be up to see you in a few minutes and then if everything looks okay we can move you into a better room where you can rest." Bruce waited until Loki's eyes had flicked over to see if Tony was aware of this plan and then returned to Bruce once again puzzled.

"What?"

Tensing visibly, eyes looking a bit more panicked than when Bruce first arrived Loki made a doubtful face. "Done. Healing?" Loki asked, his speech labored, his voice dismayed and a bit watery

"Well yeah." Bruce said. "For now anyway."

Tony saw total despair over take the god, before his eyes closed a moment in pain and possibly Loki's lower lip had quivered before being pressed into a firm line.

"Crippled." He had tried to sound matter of fact, but had looked away, obviously ashamed of the broken hitch in his voice and the tears trembling on his lashes.

"Hey, no. Loki—"

Chapter End Notes

As always comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Visiting Hours

Chapter Summary

Yes... Well we're still at the hospital. Deal. It's call character progression or something like that. :D Hey at least Loki is awake. Mostly.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 32 Visiting Hours

Even after the surgeon and Tony's doctor had left, it had taken an hour to convince Loki that while he would be laid up for a few months and would have to undergo therapy, no serious permanent damage had been done. Bruce, ever helpful had tried to be comforting, but his unwillingness to sugar coat and his slipping up and alluding to minor permanent damage temporarily derailed Tony's attempts to get the god into a less despairing frame of mind.

Of course Loki zoning out from a combination of the pain meds and despondency kicking in hadn't helped a lot either.

With Bruce in the room Loki had mostly curtailed his mumbling and totally stopped making the tea kettle noises, meaning it was harder to tell if he was awake or not. Harder, but not of course impossible. Now instead of a bit of noise, it was firmly pressed lips and a tension around his eyes and neck muscles that indicated the god's return from the Land of the Nod.

By the time they had moved Loki from the ICU ward to his private room on the Ortho ward it was mid-morning and Tony was almost asleep on his feet.

Standard Stark Hospital Protocol determined that most private hospital rooms were too small for an in room caretaker. So a standard double room was used with the extra furniture out of it. So there was lots of room for Bruce to move around while checking that IV lines and the various monitor patches were correctly attached to the god.

He looked up at Tony with a frown. "Tony, you need to get some sleep. Go home for a few hours; I'll stay here as long as you need me too."

Irritated, Tony tossed him a look. "Couldn't they have been more careful?" he demanded.

Tony was tired and hungry and totally pissed. The move from the ICU bed onto the slightly larger ward bed had severely jostled his charge. It had been a major production number since they had to unhook the traction on Loki's leg. Additionally the casted arm, multiple bandages, IV's and drain tubes running everywhere made it difficult to find a place to even lift the god without causing him massive pain. Frankly if Tony had known what a circus it was going to be to do the damn transfer he'd have just told them to put the damn bed on his tab and tell ICU they weren't getting it back.

Eventually, under Bruce's direction the two transfer aides, Tony and Bruce used the bed sheet under the god to lift and shift him, while the unit nurse assigned to Loki's room supported and moved the splinted leg. Re-hooking the leg traction, propping up the god's casted arm and adjusting all the drains, IV's and cables took several long minutes, but all in all was easier than Tony had thought it would be. But it still was more than enough disturbance to cause Loki to become impossibly paler and start sweating profusely. Tony rolled a much more comfortable Stark Industries supplied chair over, and once comfortably seated he resumed his stroking and soothing.

He motioned impatiently for Bruce to get a washcloth from the small pile on the supply table. "Wet that for me please and then get him something for pain now that he's allowed the good stuff. I'll go to sleep when he does."

"I'm pretty sure I can handle him for you," Bruce reached down and adjusted an IV line. "It's not like he's going anywhere. Oh.... I almost forgot." Bruce patted his jacket pockets a few times and then dug his hand into one coming back up with Tony's phone. I should have given this to you this morning. Sorry."

Tony could feel his face lighting up as he took the phone and set it on the bed by Loki's leg. "Oh Bruce, you really know how to take care of me. But seriously? With Fury's pets out in the hall I want me or you here at all times... Awake. They won't mess with me and definitely won't mess with you. I got my SI guys out in the hall one will be doing identity checks on the nurses, but I want to make sure no one gets in here unless one of us is bright eyed, bushy tailed and watching their every move.

"Tony do you honestly think Fury will try something stupid?"

"We are talking about Fury, so yeah. Yeah I do, unless we're watching him."

"Fine Tony. If that's how you want it, I'm cool with it. I'll be back in a few minutes." Bruce said whisking out of the door, where a very interested Barton was having his view blocked by one of Tony's security guards.

Tony waved and was shot a murderous look from Barton before the door was firmly closed by Bruce. Heaven knew who the hospital thought Loki was, hopefully some sort of visiting royalty. Which come to think about it wasn't a bad idea. Tony thought for a moment then tapped instruction for his security guards to leak that reason as a cover story and sent them to Happy and Pepper.

It wasn't much; just a tiny thread of sound but it caught Tony's attention making him look down. Two dull green eyes were looking up at him.

"Hey, it's okay." Tony used the damp cloth to gently pat away the sweat from Loki's face, neck and upper chest areas that weren't covered with dressings. "Bruce will get you something. He's got that cute-unmarried-rumpled-doctor-who-needs-someone-to-care-for-him look, trust me single nurses are suckers for it," he assured the god, who was once again making tiny keening noises with each breath.

“You know, Bruce is a great guy and he kinda likes you. You don’t have to be all silent and strong or anything stupid like that when he’s here. He don’t judge you know.” Loki’s eyes had narrowed at the insinuation that he was being stupid, but Tony just grinned. “Look, in a few minutes he’ll be back with something that will help with the pain and then we can both get some sleep.”

Loki’s mouth moved a few times before actual sound came out. “ow long,” he asked in a rough voice. Pretty post-surgery-crap-stuck-down-your-air-way coupled with nothing to drink so far today. Perfectly normal Tony knew from his own bouts of surgery. Frowning, Tony stripped open a straw and offered him a sip of ice water that the nurse had left on the side table.

“How long what?” He asked.

Loki swallowed and then licked his damaged lips. “How long. Gone.” When Tony only frowned, he took a labored breath and continued. “No draught. Til back.”

“No draught? Umm, pain shot? Seriously dude, totally bad idea. Take it from me you do not want the pain to get ahead of you.” As messed up as the god’s face was, his expressions were a little harder to read, but Tony was totally getting a ‘stubborn regardless of the cost’ vibe.

“I’ll. Wait.” Loki glared before closing his eyes as if even that taxed his strength.

“Buddy, I have to tell you. That glare thing you do? Totally scary normally. Honest, gives us all a visceral little chill,” Tony grinned shaking his head at the stupidity of it all. “But right now, with the bruises and puffy skin. Just not cutting it. Besides, there is no reason for you to wait. I’m not leaving. I’ll be right over by the window.” Loki’s eyes opened and flicked that way a bit confused. “You can’t see it, but there is the niftiest little recliner that turns into a bed over there by the window. Pepper discovered it the first time my stupidity landed me in the hospital.”

Again with the narrowed eyes. Sheesh. Tony was thinking he really needed to avoid using the word stupid. Or at least avoid it until the god was strong enough to mess with on purpose.

“Oh quit that. I was talking about myself. I didn’t mean you landed in here because you were being stupid. Although...” He offered the god another drink. “Seriously though, I need a nap and so do you. Besides I’ll sleep better if I don’t have to worry about laying here in pain. Okay?”

Tony was too tired to deal with the rebellious look he was getting in between the low toned keening breaths. He dug his phone out of his pocket. “Look, Rudolf. I’ll call Pepper real quick, check in and say hi to her from both of us. Then I’ll call Jarvis and have him monitor my phone. I’ll stick it right up on that shelf the television is sitting on so he can watch and hear everything while we BOTH sleep. If anything comes up that Bruce can’t handle, he can alert my security guards out in the hallway. Hell he can call the cops if he has to.” Loki still didn’t look convinced.

Deciding that he was too tired to deal with this, Tony used his best disciplining a five year old voice. Not mean per say, just a not taking any crap, mommy is cranky and could use a drink tone. “Look we are both checking out to dreamland as soon as Bruce gets back.”

It was all Tony could do not to start laughing his head off.

“Seriously dude, the silent rebellious thing... isn’t going to work while you can’t even move to back it up. So you can pout all you want but when those pain meds show up you are going to happy sleepy bunny land. Got it?”

OoooO

“Evening Tony.”

“Huh?” Blinking, Tony ran his hand through his hair, absently noting that he had a killer case of bed head, before rubbing the sleep crust away from his eyes.

“Happy and Pepper came by a little while ago to check on you two and left dinner for both of us... And a stack of papers you need to sign.” He ignored Tony’s dramatic groan. “They said to call them if you need anything the guards can’t take care of.”

“Do I smell coffee?” Tony asked hopefully, sniffing as he got up and stretched. While not uncomfortable for what it was, there was no way that the recline-a-bed was any kind of a match for his own custom made mattress.

Bruce was sitting in the high backed station chair that Tony had rolled over by the bed earlier. “Yep. It’s fresh. I put it on when you started stirring.” He took off his glasses and smiled as Tony stumbled over to the coffee maker. The normally useless and unreachable bedside table had been relocated to underneath the television shelf; a coffee maker was sitting on a tray on top of it. A quick riffling through the drawers showed that they were stocked with everything a still sleepy billionaire would need to feed his caffeine addiction. Pepper had even added the assorted healthy snackage items that she normally stocked Tony’s lab with.

Grunting, Tony poured himself a cup of coffee, reached into the shallow closet stocked with clean clothes by either Happy or Pepper and disappeared into the bathroom without saying another word. He emerged about a half an hour later to find the bedding gone and the bed folded back up into a recliner which Bruce was lounging in while reading a paperback.

Tony was glad to see that Loki appeared to be sleeping much more comfortably than he previously had. “Huh?” He jerked his head towards the bed and looked inquiringly at Bruce.

“Really, really good pain meds. I had a word with surgeon on his afternoon rounds. I told him that Lorin hadn’t really ever been injured before and was freaking out over the pain,” Bruce said smiling gently and peering at Tony over the tops of his glasses.

Grinning at his friend Tony said, “And this is why you have a doctor sit with you when you’re fucked up. Thanks Bruce I knew there was a reason you’re the Avenger I love the best.”

“You’re welcome Tony, I think. Look, it’s getting late, I’m going to head across the street, take a shower and catch some sleep. You can call me if you need anything.”

Before Bruce left, Tony went to the door and made nice with Gary and Jeff, two of Happy’s more senior guards. He also said hello to a tired Clint and a very grumpy Agent Jasper Sitwell before ducking back in the room for a quick update from Bruce on everything that had occurred in the last twelve hours. Once Bruce left, he and Jarvis spent a while chatting and getting caught up on the day’s events from the AI’s perspective.

Occasionally glancing over to make sure his charge was still comfortable; Tony ate while working his way through the pile of papers Pepper had left. Normally he would avoid crap like this like the plague, but since there wasn’t anything else fun to do... And there was a chance that he would need her help in the next few days, Tony decided to play nice.

As soon as he was done eating he cleared the table of documents and food wrappers and started tapping away at one of his bigger design tablets. Unlike Clint and Sitwell, his lower regions were thanking him for having the foresight to include decent furniture on his Hospital Protocol list. So in addition to the recline-a-bed Happy had also brought a station chair exactly like those in his lab, a small height adjustable table and various other listed do-dads. Happy had not only gotten all his requested items delivered, along with one of his largest tablets, he’d also made sure that Stark

Security personnel ran a comprehensive bug sweep and then restricted SHIELD from entering the room while Tony waited up in recovery for Loki. Happy had also made it clear to the hospital that Tony would be waiting right beside Loki's bed, not in the damn waiting room no matter what standard hospital procedure was. And he had to admit that while occasionally irritating, Happy was efficient.

Someone, probably Pepper had also brought Loki flowers, books and 'Get Well Soon' balloons. Not that Loki was in a state to even notice them right now.

Just after two in the morning Loki woke up. He'd been so drugged up that he had apparently forgotten where he was. It took Tony and the ward nurse he had hurriedly called, several long minutes to dissuade him from frantically trying to get his leg out of traction and pull out his IV shunt. As Loki's struggles had manage to partially dislodge one of the drain tubes, neither he nor Tony were feeling quite so hot after all that.

After the nurse got a morphine pump set up and explained it to Loki. She washed up the drain tube leakage as much as Loki's restricted movement and his extensive dressings allowed and got him into a fresh hospital gown. After Tony and one of the guards helped her put new linens on the mattress they shifted a totally mortified Loki up higher on the bed so he could start sitting up a little bit. A pneumonia cough would be a bitch with all the damage in his chest and abdomen area.

Not even trying to hide his smirk, Tony walked over and patted the god's uninjured shin. "There. Feeling better now that you're all fresh and clean sweetie?"

Still not moving his body much, Loki was at least able to turn his head now without overwhelming pain. And glare, he could definitely put a bit more heat into his glare.

But not enough.

"Nope." Tony said popping the 'p', "Sorry, your glare is still off line."

Despite the tch'ing he was going to hear from the next nurse that came in, Tony lowered the height of Loki's bed as far down as it could go. All the tubes and wires were on the god's left side. The night stand that was normally on the right side was currently under the television being used as a coffee stand, leaving that space free for Tony work table.

"Now are you done throwing fits this evening?" he asked. Taking the eye roll and hiss as an affirmative answer Tony put the side rails down on his side so it didn't obstruct Loki's vision.

"Water?" Loki's voice was so hurt, so weak, that it made Tony sad for reasons he couldn't even explain. He wondered if he had been equally pathetic those times when he was hospitalized.

"Sure thing buddy." Trying to keep his tone upbeat, Tony grabbed the hospitals version of a sippy-cup. With several winces Loki moved his good hand so he could hold the cup. Tony helped him get the straw situated so he could take small sips.

Pulling up his chair so he faced the god Tony spent the rest of the night handing back the water cup and dealing with an immobilized four year old, high on narcotics with a raspy sore throat. In between bouts of light sleep, Loki had an almost terminal case of whiny 'why's'.

Why had that woman woken him? Why couldn't he have another shot to put him to sleep? Why wasn't his mother here with his chicken and greens soup? Why did his leg need a weight hanging from it? Why wouldn't Tony tell him how he ended up on Midgard? Why did it take ten minutes for the draught button to work if he was still in pain? Why couldn't Tony call Thor? Why did it

hurt just to breathe? Why couldn't he have his favorite bed fur? Why had the All Father abandoned him? Why was Midgardian medicine so primitive? Why did his head hurt so much?

And just when Tony was about to lose his last shred of patience or his fricking mind... Something would pull or spasm or something... And the god's face would crumple up in pain and silent tears would run down his cheeks causing him to turn his head away as much as he could in deep embarrassment.

If there was anything that would have convinced Tony that 'His Loki' was not the 'New York Loki' it was this evening. 'New York Loki' was a hard bitten bastard in his mid-thirties who would rather chew glass and joke about it than admit that he was in pain. 'His Loki' was a twenty plus a smidgen year old who desperately wanted his mother to kiss it and make it all better.

Solely to save his sanity, Tony began to answer every question with a question of his own to get Loki talking about something other than his current woes. Nothing tech related, since he didn't want to antagonize the guy who was injured saving his building. But little stuff, like what was your favorite food when you were a kid? Tony's was fluffernutter crackers; Loki's it turned out was Cherry tarts stolen fresh from the oven. And books, Loki liked books. So Tony told him about his personal favorite 'The Little Engine That Could', which was about... an engine. Loki's was some freaking saga about his great-grandmother Buri who used her Seiðr to break free of the primal ice and bring warmth to the land.

Seriously?

Seriously. What was worse, at least as far as Tony was concerned, was that by then the morphine had kicked in nicely and Loki did a rambling twenty minute Shakespearian recital about grandma Buri until he fell asleep. How Loki could recite a freaking Saga from his childhood hundreds of years ago was beyond him. Tony could barely remember the plot of a read-along kids book that had less than thirty pages that he had last read thirty-five years ago.

"Jarvis you still with me?"

"Of course sir."

"Good. You heard the man. The minute he's allowed solid food we need Chicken soup with greens..."

"Would wedding soup without the meatballs work do you think?"

"Yeah, sure. I guess. Tell them to sub extra chicken for the meatballs and we'll find out. We need some place that makes open faced Cherry Tarts. And don't let PETA find out we're getting one but find me a mink comforter. I don't know, ranch raised where they die of old age or something."

"Are you sure sir?" Jarvis sounded very dubious, like there was no way that Tony could be sure.

"The pelt he was describing seemed more akin to a giant lynx."

"Yeah, no. There is no way we are getting anything that isn't ranch raised. Oh, and make sure you get some matching pillow shams with it.

"Very good sir, would a satin lining be alright or does it need to be double sided?"

"How the fuck should I know? Just go with a silk or satin or whatever they have that can be delivered by the time he gets out of here. I can't see explaining that one to the hospital even if his mother had one made especially for him when he was sick as a kid.

Towards morning everything started to hurt Loki more. It was way too early for a shot, the morphine pump wasn't keeping up with Loki's pain and while he couldn't sleep, he was worn out. After one bout of silent tears he confided that he hadn't felt so bad since he was tortured by Eldjötnar while traveling in Muspelheim hundreds of years ago. Whoever and wherever that fricken was. Loki wasn't sure exactly when that was since he said it all started to blur together after a few centuries.

"Dude, you had to be a kid then. What were you doing traveling by yourself?"

"Not, child but not adult yet. Perhaps like your teen-agers. They had been tracking me for weeks." Loki rasped out, his voice still torn up but becoming more easily understandable. "I was tired and hungry and by the time they found me, I just wanted to go home," he said forlornly. "Heimdall and I don't get along, so I had been looking for a way to travel Yggdrasil's realms that didn't involve asking him for passage. The way to a place is not always the way back. Some paths are one way only. So I had no idea how to get back. By the time the Eldjötnar began hunting me in earnest I swallowed my pride and begged for transport back home."

"So what happened?" Tony asked studying the god's face as he leaned up against the bed occasionally brushing stubborn curls off Loki's face with the tips of his fingers.

"Nothing. They chased, I ran. They had come very close to me weeks earlier. I thought I had escaped but perhaps I was too young and stupid to sense the concealment spell they had cast upon me. I called and I called, but Heimdall didn't answer." Loki licked his lips nervously before sighing. "Or perhaps, there was no concealment spell, perhaps like now he had merely decided to abandon me to my fate."

Loki didn't turn his head, but he did glance sadly at Tony from the corner of his eyes. "It takes a very talented practitioner to fool Heimdall with a concealment spell. Very few can do it. So I was never sure if I had just been unlucky to have met up with a Fire Giant that powerful or if Heimdall had heard me call, saw my peril and choose to ignore me. Loki closed his eyes, sighing, "I never have trusted him."

Tony didn't say anything. Really what could he say, he didn't know the guy as anything more than a name that Loki had frantically screamed the last time he couldn't get magically zapped back to Asgard. Wrapped up in his own thoughts, Tony was sure Loki had fallen back asleep when the god spoke again. "It was several weeks after they finally captured me that they stopped watching me so closely. They thought I was too broken to escape. I hid for an entire season healing and then searching for a way back to Asgard without his help. In all these centuries I had not called for Heimdall again except for that one time on your roof."

OoooO

The second night spent in the Ortho ward was more of the same. But at least Tony wasn't bored. Exhausted? Yep. Furious at some of the crap he had been hearing about Asgard? You bet-cha. But bored? Not a fricking chance.

Unbeknownst to Tony while he slept like the dead, Loki had been carted all over the damn hospital for scans and tests that required machinery that wasn't portable. Bruce, Tony's guards, Happy, Natasha and Clint were all in attendance. Then after lunch they had shifted and turned the god for even more for the tests and scans that could be done in the room. It was late afternoon when a ultrasound tech had tried to turn Loki the wrong way and Tony awoke to a shrill scream cut short.

Tony leapt up to see Bruce struggling to stay calm. Loki had tears running down his face as he hissed Asgardian curses at a lab tech that he had caught up by the throat and was holding down

over his lap with his one good arm. The tech was trying to get loose without inflicting anymore damage on the patient he had just injured. The very upset, very high up the food chain patient.

“Whoa! Whoa! Lo!” Tony yipped hurriedly untangling from the blanket that had been covering him.

Bruce looked green around the edges, like he had already been having the day from hell, so Tony pushed him towards the door. “Dude, go get a bran muffin or green tea or something from the cafeteria.”

He waved reassuringly to his guards, ignoring Natasha and Steve as Bruce slid out the door.

Throwing himself over to the bed he pried Loki’s fingers from around the tech’s throat as gently as he could.

“Þú ert minni en haugur af skít,”* Loki hissed with narrowed eyes at the oxygen impaired tech.

“Come on Lo, let the nice man breathe okay?” Pulling the gasping man away from the bed he asked, “I think we’re done for a bit don’t you?” At the tech’s agitated nod, Tony gently pushed him and his cart away from the bed.

“Fáfróði fáviti!”** Loki shouted hoarsely as the man made his escape.

“I completely agree.” Tony soothed, trying unsuccessfully to move Loki’s arm back to the position it had been in earlier in the day without causing him more pain.

Teeth tightly clenched, Loki was breathing heavily through his nose when the nurse hurried into the room. She stopped in the door way, pinned by two ferocious glares.

“Close. The. Fucking. Door.” Tony ground out through clenched teeth. Which she hurriedly did.

“What in the hell was that tech doing anyhow?”

“Checking his gallbladder and kidneys to make sure there wasn’t any further swelling Mister Stark, we need a baseline reading so we can track any problems with those organs during Mister Othinnson’s healing.” She approached the bed cautiously obviously not wanting to incur any more wrath from either man. Somehow Loki had turned almost onto his side while trying to maneuver the physical therapy tech into a position where he could strangle him. He now had a death grip on the side rail opposite the nurse and as Tony had found out a moment ago the god was unwilling to move again.

Placing his hand on the back of Loki’s neck, Tony could feel him shivering. “Fine. I’m fine,” The god huffed. “Just... Wait.” Loki hissed squeezing his eyes closed.

“Dude you are not fine, and you can’t stay this way.” Tony retorted as the nurse smoothed the bed clothes and unsuccessfully tried to get Loki to lay back again. “Can you go get him something? Maybe if he zones out a bit we can get him to move back into a more comfortable position?”

When the nurse started to explain how it was too early, Tony bared his teeth at her, making a low noise deep in his throat. Startled, she back-pedaled a bit. When he mentioned moving his buddy somewhere that he could get some damn pain relief she said she would see if she could get permission to give Mister Othinnson his pain medicine early. She then quickly whisked out the door anxious to get away from the cranky billionaire.

Since heavy duty narcotics were never stored anywhere convenient, it took forever for her to

return. And when she did, Bruce was with her. Banner didn't say anything but he did widen his eyes a bit when presented with Tony Stark hunched over the side rail, holding, stroking and whispering calming little nothings to a violently shivering god of mischief.

"No, Tony don't move," Bruce said as Tony started to straighten. "We got this."

After administering the pain med, they tried to move Loki, but he wasn't having any of it. Tony had lowered the side rail trying to find an uninjured place to hold while helping to shift Loki. Somehow or another the minute Tony had detached the god's hand from the rail to lowered it, Loki took the opportunity to twist a white knuckled grip in the front of Tony's shirt.

"Fine Stark. Leave me alone." Loki huffed shaking and panting.

"Obviously not Rudolf. If you were fine you would be lying flat on your back in a narcotic haze watching 'Keeping up with the Kardashians' or some other mind destroying crap. Not--"

"Tony, don't argue with him. Just wait."

"But Bruce this can't be a comfortable position."

"It most likely isn't, but moving back isn't going to be any picnic either." Bruce waved the nurse towards the door. "We'll handle it. Thanks." He told her before taking off his glasses and rubbing his eyes tiredly.

Opening his mouth to argue, Tony stopped when Bruce shook his head. "Just be patient okay. Can you do that for me? Ten, fifteen minutes maybe?"

Rocking his head from side to side Tony made a face and stuck out his tongue. "You know I don't do patient very well Bruce."

"I know Tony. Now shut up for a few minutes will you?"

Tony did, but he also defiantly reached over and hit the morphine drip button. Which he had been repeatedly told that nobody but the patient was supposed to touch. Bruce gave him a sad head shake but declined to explain again why that was a bad idea and against hospital rules.

After about ten minutes Tony's whispered shushing stopped a moment. "See," he said when his stroking hand could feel that Loki wasn't shaking as badly as before. "I told you it would get better." Once again ignoring Bruce's glare, he hit the drip button. After another five minutes Loki's breathing began to even out and he buried his head against Tony's chest.

Before Tony could say anything Bruce held a finger to his lips in a 'shhhh' warning. At about the twenty minute mark the god was bonelessly slumped in Tony's arms making it difficult for Tony to move, let alone pat anything comfortingly, so he had be contenting himself with rubbing small circles on the back of Loki's neck and the little strip of the god's back that wasn't covered by bandages. A few minutes later after sneakily snapping a few pictures of Tony and the god with his phone, no doubt for future blackmail material, Bruce indicated that he could untangle the god's fingers from his t-shirt.

"I'll get you for that," Tony told him.

"I'm sure you will." Bruce replied calmly. Come on Tony, let's get him back down while he's deep into this."

As soon as they had arranged the long limbs to Bruce's satisfaction the doctor fixed Tony with a

basilisk stare, “And if you ever touch that damn morphine drip button while he’s sleeping, I swear I will Hulk out on you.”

Apparently Bruce was not a fan of the good stuff. Tony just tried to look contrite and not wobble his head like a disrespectful first grader. They finished arranging the god as comfortably as they could, ate the dinner that the guards brought them and Bruce extracted a solemn promise from Tony that he would leave that ‘damn morphine button’ alone before he left for the evening.

“Just behave Tony. I’ll see you in the morning.”

Tony waved goodbye to his science bro sure that tomorrow had to be better than today had been. He was wrong.

Chapter End Notes

This will update on Monday.

*"Þú ert minni en haugur af skít" - You are less than a pile of shit

**"Fáfróði fáviti!" - Ignorant asshole! Translation per Google Translate... so blame them not me if they are wildly wrong. ;D

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Visitor

Chapter Summary

Loki has a bad night. Tony has a worse morning. What light on Central Park doth break?

Chapter Notes

Have I yet mentioned how much I hate that these bridge chapters took on a life of their own? Or how the last two are still fighting me like a Bilgesnipe with an angry Æsir on its back?

Anyhooooo. New Chapter! Whoo Hoo! Ahead of schedule! Yay us!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 33 Visitor

It was about eight that evening when all the movement and jostling that had occurred earlier in the day ganged up on Loki. The medication drip just couldn't get in front of the pain and he was simply unable to go back to sleep. By midnight Loki had become so agitated that Tony couldn't get him to calm down at all.

Loki was sweating, shaking and swearing at him in Asgardian, stuff that Jarvis claimed he couldn't translate. And Tony was swearing at the nurses, but at least he used English so that everyone could know how upset he was. No amount of water sips, petting, storytelling or patting worked to settle the god. Not giving a fuck what Bruce would think, Tony ended up pressing that damn pain med button at exactly the ten minute mark, trying to get enough morphine into the god to calm his ass down. After several hours when absolutely nothing worked, Tony went quietly ballistic.

And Tony hated going quietly ballistic. It wasn't the ballistic part he minded, hell he always enjoyed that, it was the having to do it quietly. If Tony Stark had to lose his shit because someone was being an ass, he wanted to do it as loudly as possible so the whole world knew that someone had incurred his wrath.

Doing it quietly was just plain wrong.

Because the third shift nursing staff claimed that they couldn't reach Loki's surgeon, Tony had one of his guards go and get the head nurse and he called his personal doctor and started complaining. The minute the head nurse, urged on by the guard bustled angrily into the room the billionaire thrust his phone at her so Doctor Vasling could give her orders for something stronger.

And hopefully yell at her too, because Tony had woken him up and kept him on the phone for twenty minutes until her sorry ass had showed up.

And no he wasn't the least bit sorry about it.

The next morning, Happy found him slumped over the edge of the bed whispering nonsense, his arm stretched across the god so Loki could hold it in a death grip.

“Happy? Wha—” Tony mumbled as his security chief gently pried a sleeping Loki’s fingers off of his hand. “I wasn’t sleeping,” he proclaimed blinking and trying to get his eyes to focus.

“Go lay down boss. I’ll sit with him until Doctor Banner gets here.”

OoooO

“Bruce? Wha--” Tony turned his head enough to uncover one eye that looked blearily up at Bruce. Fucking hell. People had to start leaving him alone when he was trying to sleep. They bitched when he didn’t sleep but kept waking him up when he did.

All of them.

“Come on Tony. If you get up right now, you’ll have enough time to shower and shave before I have to leave. Here, I made you some fresh coffee.”

“Hummm.” Tony buried his face back between his pillow and the wall and whined, “But mommmmm, I’m too sick to go to school today.”

Laughing, Bruce yanked his pillow up from under his head, causing it to bounce forward and hit the nearby wall with a dull thunk.

“Ow. Call the papers, I need to put out a press release.” Tony grumbled, petulantly waving away Bruce’s offer of a helping hand.

“Really? What are you going to tell them?” Asked Bruce, far too amused at Tony’s pain for his liking.

Climbing stiffly out of the recliner bed Tony laced the fingers of both hands together and stretched them over his head with a little back arching groan.

“That you’re a big meanie who takes delight in hurting unsuspecting people.”

“Yeah there’s a newsflash for them alright.” Bruce told him dryly. “Did I mention that Happy’s next shift change is due here in twenty minutes? And despite the damage they will no doubt do to your arteries, I’ve told them to bring you cheeseburgers and fries from P.J. Clarke’s. Oh and I bought a fresh chocolate cake donut for you this morning. It’s over on the coffee stand.”

“I knew there was a reason I loved you.” Tony said grabbing the coffee cup from Bruce and after a cautious sip to make sure it wasn’t too hot, he gulped down half of it. Having got down enough of his caffeinated elixir of life to jump start his body, Tony looked over at a confused Loki who was watching their banter with one brow raised in inquiry.

Bringing the fingertips of his free hand to his lips, Tony blew a mocking kiss at Loki. “You’re looking a lot better this afternoon Reindeer Games, more like death warmed over rather than death. It’s a good look for you,” he joked before disappearing into the bathroom.

OoooO

As Tony disappeared into the bathroom, Bruce sighed and looked over at Loki. “Have you seen Tony naked yet?” Surprised by such an odd question, a wide eyed Loki shook his head.

“Do you want to see Tony naked today?”

Loki looked at him wondering what in the Nine Realms the doctor was trying to say. He rolled the ice cube Bruce had given him into one cheek and mumbled, “No. Why?”

“Because he is a freaking exhibitionist, that why.” Bruce gathered up some clean clothes from the closet area before turning and smiling at the god. “And rather than ask someone to hand him his clothes he will prance his bare ass out here to get them trying to embarrass us. With a towel around his hips if we’re lucky, without one if we’re not.”

“Ah.” Loki had spent plenty of time with Asgard’s army and on quests with Thor and his friends where privacy was not really an option. So he was not really the least bit squeamish about nudity. Male or female. However Frigga was not one to tolerate her sons behaving inappropriately in the palace with all the servants around so he had also had situational modesty beaten into his head for centuries. Frigga would consider someone parading around naked in a civilized setting to be in very poor taste.

“Oh yeah. So to save us both from that horrible fate, I think I’ll just pop these in the bathroom so he can dress before he comes back out.”

Doctor Banner sounded so put upon that Loki felt the smallest of smiles tugging at the corners of his mouth. “Appreciated,” the god mumbled around his now mostly melted ice cube.

Banner called out to Stark that his clothes were here and then shut the bathroom door firmly.

“Hey, I can tell he is going to be a handful today. I hate to leave you alone with him when he is bouncing all over the place, but one of the clinics I volunteer at has a staff accreditation hearing this afternoon so I have to be there.” Bruce told him, apparently remorseful about leaving him with a manic Stark.

While Bruce set about gathering his belongings Loki jabbed at the pain medicine button again. He looked at the cup of ice situated about a league away on the bed table, thinking that he might be able to reach it, but before he could make much progress his lids grew very heavy as fatigue and the brief respite from pain pulled him under.

OoooO

It was late in the afternoon and Tony’s cheeseburgers were just a grease and cheese laden memory when Natasha knocked twice before poking her head in the door.

“Tony you have a visitor.” Natasha told him, expertly avoiding the SI guard who was trying to get in front of her. Her voice, which was neutral on the surface, was trying to convey a warning while her eyes flicked over to look at the sleeping god and took in every detail they could.

Oh great he thought, Fury.

While the person Natasha ushered into the room past his protesting guards had an eye patch, he was definitely not Fury.

Fuck my life, Tony thought in despair. I totally do not need this right now.

“Tony, Fury is on his way.” Natasha told him as she tried to accompany the Asgardian into the room.

Three guesses who called him the moment God Daddy showed up Tony thought sourly.

“Nice try Red. Out. Just get out.” Tony snapped motioning to his guards. “Gary, you guys want to get her the hell out of here? Call the cops if you have to. Shoot her, I don’t care, but I don’t want her poking even the tip of her nose in this room again.”

“Sorry Mister Stark, after Mister Othinsson’s father showed us his ID she barrelled right past when we were going to pass him through to you. There wasn’t much we could do without causing a scene.”

“Piss on that, next time cause as big a scene as you want. Maybe it will help get her thrown out of here.” Tony said heatedly while making his way past Odin towards the door.

“Tony, I really think you need me in there with you until Fury shows up.”

“Natasha, how many times do I have to tell you that I don’t want you in here? I know graceful acceptance of denial is not part of your main skill set, but do me a favor and indulge in it once in a while. You have very recently pissed me off and Fury always pisses me off. Both of you are on my shit list right now. So get out or I’ll put on the suit and shoot you myself.”

Pushing the door shut Tony turned. “So... You have an id?” He asked wondering what the fuck the guards thought when they saw an Asgardian Driver’s License.

“Of course, would you like to see it to verify who I am?” Odin’s voice was mocking, condescending and fairly disinterested, all at the same time. Good trick that Tony thought.

“Thor did mention Loki was adopted so that would explain the lack of physical resemblance. Although I can see that the looking down your nose at people like they were ants under your boot is obviously a learned familial expression.”

Tony studied the tall elderly man in front of him. While old, he didn’t look the least bit frail. He had a muscular frame that had thickened with age, neatly groomed long grey-white hair, beard and mustache combo and blue of his remaining eye very much recalled Thor to mind. His dark charcoal suit was obviously well made and for bling he was sporting a massive gold signet ring with what looked like three interlocking horns on it and seemed to match his heavy gold cuff-links.

So yeah, it most likely was Odin. Meditatively Tony considered that he had not yet crossed pissing off an Elder God from his bucket list. Okay so maybe Loki was a god, but according to Frigga he was only just recently past his teens he so didn’t count as a Elder God. The Trickster was at most a punk kid godling. So with his goal firmly in mind Tony affixed his best smirky expression on his face and decided to go for it.

“So you have to be Odin. Nice suit by the way. A bit stodgy but it works for you. While I am pretty sure you are who you told them, I am curious to see this ID of yours.”

“You are exactly as Thor described you.” Odin walked over closer to the bed and waved his right hand a few times before turning back to Tony. “Anthony Stark, how is it my son was injured while in your care?”

“Let me guess, devastatingly good looking and charming right?”

“No. Disrespectful and tiny.”

Odin held out his hand, again looking down his nose at the billionaire. “This is what you wanted to see Anthony Stark.”

“Ah. No. See that is an empty hand, I was looking for more in the way of a drivers--” Tony

stopped as a white mist enveloped Odin's hand. As it dissipated a royal blue passport became visible.

Okay then.

Tony reached out slowly and took the proffered passport. He stroked a callused index finger over the embossed gold 'Ísland, Iceland, Islande' printed on the front above an elaborate gold shield. He stuck his lower lip out thoughtfully before asking, "Nice coat of arms. Is that you on the front in your Traveller form?"

"Hardly Anthony Stark, it's Bergrisi the rock-giant."

"So it's a relative. Cool." Tony opened the passport and saw it was made out to one Owen Othinnson. The picture was good, but the date of birth... "Seriously? You expect people to believe you are only sixty-five? Just from looking at you I would peg you as not a day younger than twenty-six hundred. And I'm being generous here."

Odin did a very nice modified 'save me please from idiots' eye roll. Again Tony thought he could see where Loki had picked up a few of his expressions.

"Hey, no matter how many times I correct him, why does Thor always call me Son of Stark or Man of Iron and you seem to know how to use people's proper forms of address?"

Odin huffed. "Thor told me you were a genius. Obviously we disagree on what that term means. Loki may be the one known for his mischief, but Thor has been his brother for a thousand years. Do you think he learned nothing?"

"Whoa." Tony stepped back as though he had been slapped.

No. Really?

"Thor's mocking me? Err, us?"

"A prank merely. While I am not in awe of Thor's mental capabilities, he is much more intelligent than your average Midgardian. He acts simple and you dismiss him as relatively harmless eater of 'pop tarts', which are a vile travesty of a food stuff I might add. You would do well not to make such judgments about me based on Thor's pretence of foolishness. Now, I ask you for the last time, how is it my son was injured while in your care?"

"Kind of odd he hasn't pulled the punch line yet though isn't it? Are you sure you aren't the one pulling a prank?"

Visibly irritated, Odin's replied, "No. I am not making jest of you. The Æsir live thousands of years, a century is not a long a time to nurse a really good jape."

O-kay... Polite urbane, vaguely condescending Odin had vanished. Tony was now dealing with a much testier boss god. Possibly time for a little self-preservation to kick in.

"Also I think we have established that I am not Thor, nor am I willing to act the fool as part of an elaborate hoax." Odin smiled thinly, for perhaps a certain value of the word, since there was a large percentage of grimace in his expression. "So may we proceed Anthony Stark?"

Tony shook his head equally disgusted. "Fine. Whatever. We're proceeding. Three days ago there was a major attack on this city by a maniac named Victor Von Doom and his robots. The tower where I live. Where he now lives, was also attacked. Windows broke; explosions, structural

damaged all those kinds of things.”

Just not as much damage as much as there would have been. Trying to stay out of trouble Tony had thus far only spoken the gospel truth. He wasn't sure what would or wouldn't piss off Odin so he decided not to mention anything about Loki still using runes. One, he didn't know how much trouble it would get the younger god in. And two, he didn't want to risk Odin slapping a rune blocker or something on the guy. Tony might have plans for such skills.

“Actually he didn't do too badly. As a matter of fact, he did a damn good job. Loki may be rocking a mortal body right now but I don't know of too many people who could fight like he did. During the attack he made his way up to the roof and destroyed one of the robots, by himself only using a wooden broom handle and some fancy foot work. He has some serious bad assed fighting skills.” Tony offered, trying to slide right over the whole ‘how’ he made it to the roof thing. As if he was following the script, Loki groaned in his sleep.

Sighing, Odin walked over towards the bed. “And this is the best your healers can do?” he asked, already seeming to know the answer to that question was ‘well duh’. Not that even Tony was stupid enough to verbalize that. Or at least not yet he wasn't.

Tony put the head of the bed down flat per Odin's instructions. Just to be helpful he also raised the entire bed waist high to make Odin's examination easier and pulled the chair and his table away to give Odin better access to his son. “You want me to wake him up?” He offered. “He'll be able to tell you better than I can what hurts.”

Odin made a complicated hand motion over Loki, briefly touching his fingertips to the broken god's temples and joining his thumbs over Loki's forehead. A tiny gold glow shone from underneath Odin's fingers for a moment before melting into the younger god's head. “No Anthony Stark. He won't be waking up at all until long after I've left.”

Tony really hated magic. And he wasn't too fond of Odin either.

Odin had waved a hand and the all the tubes, IV's and monitor patches started to extract themselves from Loki's body to curl in a messy tangle on the sheet beside him.

Tony thought he was going to lose his lunch. Right here, right now, right on the shoes of big scary guy with the eye patch. But he didn't, instead he went to his all-time favorite Stark method of coping with the unexpected... He verbalized and fled.

“Holy shit!” Tony yelped jumping away from the bed. It was like some sort of bad zombie movie or something. The monitor patches and IV's slithering across the bed weren't quite nightmare inducing... But the drain tubes filled with puss and guck that smelled like week old road kill? Tony was pretty sure that he was going to have at least a few nightmares from watching those previously inanimate drain tubes suddenly come alive and start worming their way out of Loki's body.

Several times Tony had to turn away and fight down the urge to hurl.

Hearing a commotion outside the door, Tony suddenly realized that while Odin had waved his hand and silenced the machine that had been protesting the removal of Loki's IV and sensor patches, the monitor display was still showing an emergency alert that must have gone to the nurse's stations.

“Fuck!”

Tossing a disgusted look at Odin, regardless of the risk it entailed, Tony leapt forward and flipped a Loki's top sheet and blanket over him, hiding the god's torso, removed wires, tubes and the

bloody discharge that was currently making a mess on the mattress beside him. “We may not be advanced Space Vikings but we do have technology you know.” He hissed angrily. “If you have the mo-jo to silence the damn monitors don’t you think you could have also stopped the alert from being transmitted?”

Odin narrowed his eyes at Tony’s insolence, but before the mortal could start to worry too much, both of them turned to look at the door as Loki’s assigned nurse and unit’s charge nurse came flying into the room in a flat out panic.

“Stop.” Odin’s voice commanded sounding like clap of thunder. He took a step towards them before they could get anywhere near the bed. That had to be some Jedi mind control trick because both nurses came to a screeching halt just inside the door. “Close the door please.” Odin commanded.

Yep. Mind tricks totally had to run in the family because there is no other way the nurse supreme would have remained quiet, let alone listened to the one eyed bastard otherwise.

In less time than it took Tony’s heart rate to get back under control Odin had shown them a physician’s identification card from Iceland’s Landspítali University Hospital, his passport and what looked like a driver’s license of some sort. Tony peeked over as the charge nurse was handing them back to Odin and saw that the name now on his ID was for a Doctor Owen Alfather. Nice trick that.

“Look, ladies. Doctor... Alfather is a specialist; I flew him in for a consultation. His time here is kinda tight. So if you ladies wouldn’t mind...” Which was the flimsiest fricken story Tony had ever come up with. A doctor who didn’t check in with the hospital? But as the charge nurse opened her mouth to argue Odin twitched his finger and suddenly they were nodding their heads agreeably and heading back out the door.

“These aren’t the droids you’re looking for.” Tony mumbled, earning himself yet another irritated look from Odin.

“Lock the door Anthony Stark; we do not want to be interrupted again.” Odin commanded.

“Yeah, whatever. Wait one,” Tony said sticking his head out the door to tell his guys they didn’t want anyone entering or interrupting until he came back out.

As Tony closed and locked the door, Odin began waving his hands again until a glowing gold swirling hologram of Loki’s body appeared over the bed, with quite a few problem areas lit up. The Asgardian version of a cat scan Tony supposed. Tony stealthily called Jarvis and set his phone back up on the television shelf, hoping the videos wouldn’t be totally unusable. He would have killed to have some of his high def cameras, scanning and diagnostic equipment pointed towards Odin right now.

Of course the swirly scan thingy was nothing that Tony couldn’t do. Well if he had Loki in his workshop hooked up to half a dozen things he could. So okay, Odin being able to do it on the fly at the hospital was pretty damn bad-assed in a geeky kind of way.

But Tony could play it cool.

Odin spent the next hour hand waving and muttering and making different swirls and clouds of lights appear and doing the whole ‘laying of hands to cure the sick’ thing while Loki writhed, groaned, keened and bled. But no matter how high the younger god arched off the bed in pain, he didn’t wake up.

Odin, who for the most part had been working with only the occasional derisive humf and humm was currently right in the middle of working on Loki's broken ankle. The surgical steel screws making a horrible squeaking noise as they backed out of the bone. And Tony really could have lived without hearing the small wet popping noise they made as they back out of half healed flesh, when someone tried opening the locked door.

A moment later Tony's phone rang.

Odin shot him a disgusted look, which Tony totally ignored even if it made his insides turn over. "What part of I didn't want to be disturbed did you not understand Jarvis?" he hissed putting the phone to his ear.

"Sir, you have a possible situation in the hallway shaping up. "Gary Bottella just reported to Happy that Director Fury has arrived. Oh and Thor Odinson has asked me for an update."

"Fine, call Fury and tell him to keep his pants on, I'll let him in as soon as Doctor Alfather gives the okay." He sighed tiredly, "Look just show Thor the security vids of the attack and call him a driver or something. We don't want him flying here with his hammer and making more of a scene here than we're already causing."

"Very good sir."

"Oh and Jarvis, tell Thor to change before he heads this way. Give him a gym bag or something for his clothes and that damn hammer. Tell him we are trying to do this on the down low." Tony paused a moment considering, "And explain to him exactly what that means okay and that this is not a joke. You're the best, gotta go."

Without hanging up, Tony stuck the phone back on the shelf. "We've got company out there." He informed Odin, who of course heard everything and so doesn't bother to answer the lowly mortal.

The door handle was jiggled twice more before Odin let out a long huff and pulled the blankets back up over a now freshly bloodied, but hopefully freshly healed Loki. And all the yucky stuff that had been inside him, was now beside him making a mess on the mattress. Tony knows the nurses are going to shit when they see the sheets.

"He will be very tired and worn out for..." Odin paused thinking a minute, "a month. Perhaps a month and a half. This was much the same procedure as when you first saw him, except greatly accelerated."

"Okay... Why didn't that Eir broad do it like this the first time?" Tony asked curious. "Is he going to sleep the whole time? With the green glow thingy over him?"

"No Anthony Stark. He will be awake, just very weak and tired. I strongly suggest you take him back to his cell today."

"So no glow?"

Odin's smile was almost a grimace, but Tony decided to take it at face value. "No. No glow. Eir does not have the raw power to heal like this. And frankly, her way while slower is much less painful." He looked at the various medical debris lumps under the covers. "Although, much of the pain came from removing the foreign articles that had been placed in his body." Now Odin turned his full and not very happy attention to Tony.

"While I don't expect you will let this happen again..." Odin lifted his head, looking down at Tony with a gimlet glare, no less powerful for being one eyed, "it is best to be prepared." He fished

around in one of the suit's pockets and came up with a large lumpy cloth sack. "His mother sends these. They are healing stones. Place them over an open flame until they are warm to the touch and then crush them above the injured area. They aren't a gentle form of healing, but the stone dust will take care of most problems."

Tony reached out his hand. Odin paused for a moment, holding but not releasing the heavy sack above Tony's outstretched hand. "They are quite valuable and I would be most unhappy if they were damaged by scientific study or used on anyone else. Do you understand me little mortal?"

"Yeah yeah. Real unhappy. Smiting even. Got it." Tony huffed ignoring the 'little mortal' crack. It was all Tony could do not to make 'gimmie' hands for the sack Odin was holding out to him. So okay, nothing invasive on the stones and only using one just in case a passive scan was somehow harmful. Tony could work with that. Thankfully before Tony's thoughts could be totally sidetracked by the whole scientific wonder of it all, Odin continued.

"Also should an incident of this magnitude ever occur again, just go out anywhere in the open and call for Heimdall. Call his name perhaps three times to make sure you have his attention and then state your problem."

Seriously? He has to say Beetlejuice three times to get Asgard's attention? Well okay Heimdall, but still. What are the fricken odds?

Since Odin is still giving him that freaky one eyed stare of his, Tony decides to pay attention. He's not so much worried about a test later as he is with being turned into a newt or something for looking like he didn't give a big enough shit or something.

"Or in the event of an escape," Odin continued. "Since I can't imagine why he was allowed to be out anywhere he could have been attacked in the first place."

And so they rolled back to the question Tony had been avoiding since Odin had arrived.

Fortunately, before he finally had to answer that awkward question, they were interrupted by a brief pounding on the door and a booming voice called out, "Friend Tony, I need to speak to you!"

"Oh. Good. Hammer Time is here. I'll just let him in shall I?" Tony smiled sliding towards the door anxious to avoid any more of the 'why was my kid on the roof' discussions.

"No, no one else. Just Thor. Still busy. Sorry." Ignoring Fury's hissed demands for entry, Tony grabbed Thor's wrist and pulled him in, firmly shutting the door behind him.

Pulling away from Tony, Thor hurried over to the bed, relief spreading across his face upon seeing that his brother looked so well. "Ah," he breathed out. A curiously soft sound coming from a guy whose every other utterance boomed like the thunder he was god of.

"Tony, your Jarvis showed me how Loki was injured helping to protect your tower from an attack. Do you know who would do something so vile?"

"Do you remember us talking about Victor Von Doom? When you were here last?"

Golden brows furrowed, "Yes... The man with the metal mask was it not?"

"Yeah that's him. Anyhow he attacked the city. I don't know why, maybe he didn't get enough iodine as a child, who knows."

Thor looked puzzled.

“You know what? Not important. Anyhow my tower was also attacked--”

“Is the Lady Pepper safe?”

“Pep? Yeah, she took all the employees down to the garage. Anyhow one of the floors that got shot at was your brother’s and he talked Jarvis into giving him parole until the attack was over and came up onto the roof to help.”

“Loki swore an oath not to try to escape?” Thor interrupted with a puzzled frown.

“Well. Yeah. After the emergency he solemnly pledged to return to his floor... Or something like that. Anyhow, I got to tell you Point Break, I was impressed. He took out a pretty nasty doom-bot with no armor, using nothing more than a broom handle and a couple of his fancy kicks. Your brother has huevos muy grandes.”

“Huevos? A large breakfast? Should he be eating right now?” Now Thor was totally confused, or if Odin was to be believed he was yanking Tony’s chain.

“Yeah, ummm, no. You know what? Not important either, it was just slang Thor. Anyhow it was pretty freaking brave of him, There were several of them flying around and while he was attacking a second doom-bot one blind-sided him, grabbed him and took off up into the air with him.”

Now looking like a grumpy bear, Thor moved to stand closer to Loki’s bed. “Why?” He demanded.

From what Jarvis had heard, Tony had his suspicions, but he really didn’t want to mention that Doom knew who Loki was. Or that he thought it worthwhile to try and snatch him.

“Hell if I know Blondie, probably to keep him from killing anymore robots.”

“My brother acquitted himself with honor of course. He was injured while protecting other people correct?”

“Well... Yeah.”

“My mother will be most pleased to hear this. Not that he was injured of course, that was most unfortunate.”

“Well yeah. But in my defence at least this time it wasn’t from people beating him while he was chained to a wall or anything. That has to count for something.” Tony could hear Odin growl under his breath.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Ding Ding - Fury vs Odin

Chapter Summary

Odin doesn't have a lot of patience with Tony's crap. Less with Fury's.

Chapter Notes

Not totally in love with this chapter... But despite many attempts it never did get any better. *sigh* In the end I got tired of messing with it and moved on. Sorry.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 34 - Fury vs Odin

"I think it might be time to talk to Director Fury, Thor." Odin said testily, interrupting any further conversation between his heir and Tony. "Please fetch him immediately."

By the time Odin had decided to speak to Fury, the Director of Shield was almost purple with anger. Tony hurriedly introduced everyone and thought privately that only Coulson's calming presence was keeping the director from exploding or trying to shoot the King of Asgard. Not that that would have done him any good.

"How many defenders responded to the attack Director Fury?" Odin asked calmly, ignoring all of Fury's questions and demands for information.

"Seven Avengers, about fifteen shield agents and maybe sixty local enforcement officers." Fury spat, "But what I want to--"

"And how many of the attackers were killed? And by whom?" The elder god interrupted.

"Disabled or destroyed," said Coulson smoothly. "They weren't sentient. The Avengers took care of thirty-two and eight were taken out by other forces."

Odin drew himself up and inclined his head in a prideful manner, looking down his nose at Fury. The stance and expression was so reminiscent of Loki while he had been on the helicarrier that Tony just knew where Loki had picked up the body language. From the look on Fury's face he seemed to have noticed it as well.

Odin's appearance and attitude It had to be driving Nicky insane. So, against all odds Tony's day was looking up. At least a little bit.

"So my son, without a real weapon, armed only with a wooden stick was one of the few, other than the Avenger's, to destroy an attacker?" Odin's expression and voice were so calm you would think he and Fury were talking about the merits of various wines or gym memberships or something.

"That is correct your majesty," Coulson said with a little head bob of respect. This earned him Odin's undivided attention.

“Ah yes, Agent Coulson.” He studied Coulson openly for a moment. And at the exact second Fury started to say something he continued. “Thor was told that you died by his brother’s hand. You seem remarkably healthy for someone who is dead.” Turning to Fury, his voice still politely disinterested he asked, “Did you not think that his survival might be something we needed to know when you sent our other son back for trial?”

“Well with all the other people he killed, we just kind of thought one more death was in the noise.” Fury ground out quickly; as if afraid that Odin would interrupt or talk over him again. “But what we really need know is why Asgard is using earth like a penal colony.”

“Ooo and when he’s done telling you that Nick, maybe you could explain how you tried to treat his kid like an experimental lab animal.” Tony gleefully tossed that into the conversation, much in the manner of an arsonist throwing a Molotov cocktail into a vacant house.

“Zip it Stark,” Fury ground out, glancing at a furious Thor before a boom of thunder shook the building.

“Why should I? You did try.”

“That would violate the terms of his incarceration.” Odin observed, voice and manner still deceptively mild. Not at all what Tony had been expecting.

“We didn’t make an agreement,” Fury ground out, making it very clear what his objections were.

“Oh?” Odin asked, his smile and tone gently sardonic. “And you certainly don’t sound happy about this whole arrangement.”

“We aren’t.”

“And exactly who may I ask is unhappy? Your government who signed the agreement with Queen Frigga... or just you?” Odin’s one eye widened in mocking inquiry.

And there was another Loki expression, the Reindeer Games had obviously picked up a boatload of smugly shitty mannerisms from Odin.

“The World Security Council,” Fury told him with a tight grimace, trying quite unsuccessfully to out stare a god who had been ruling an entire planet for hundreds of times longer than Fury had even been alive.

Real amusement lit up in Odin’s remaining eye and he gave a muffled little chuckle. “And this World Security Council controls the government of this sovereign nation?” Odin asked contemptuously, obviously knowing that wasn’t true. Odin did another one of the ‘raised head looking down his nose’ expressions that he and Loki seemed to have in common.

Odin looked serenely around the room making sure to make eye contact with Coulson for a long moment. “Since the incident in this city, I have occasionally watched your World Security Council’s private debates while seated on Hliðskjálf. I wish I could say that they are reasoned debates of intelligent beings who are looking out for the greater good of your planet.” Clasp his hands together, Odin stood watching them serenely and again, right before Fury spoke he overrode him. “But alas, they are not.”

“They are the ones who are empowered to decide who stays on this planet,” Fury snapped, hurrying to complete his sentence before Odin could interrupt him.

“No. I think not. They are charged with protecting your planet from threats that are too great to be

controlled by any one nation. Which Loki is not. It has been demonstrated for the last three years that in his current state Loki can be easily controlled by one short mortal.” Odin waved his hands and was suddenly holding a soft bound book, black with a silver logo of a globe surrounded by stylized leaves. He offered it to apoplectic Fury. “So this is hardly a matter for them or you. At least according to their charter, that states in a situation of this sort jurisdiction would fall only under the sovereign nation in question. I’ve book marked the relevant passage for you.”

Tony was sooooo glad that Jarvis was recording this, even if there was only one angle because this was going to be pure apoplectic gold. Fury looked like he was about to self-combust any second now.

Fury snatched the book out of Odin’s hands and snarled, “This is classified, you have no right to this information.”

“That is certainly your opinion. But I think you will find that there is almost nothing on this planet that can be hidden from me if I really decide to look for it.” Odin smirked and waved his hand again, this time coming up with a thin sheaf of papers. “Perhaps you would be interested in the likeness and names of the members of your supposedly secret World Security Council?” Odin asked handing the papers over to a shocked Fury.

“Now, I can’t say I was overjoyed when his mother sent Loki to Midgard, but it was done with the permission of the local government and it is not for you or your council to say otherwise.” Odin’s smile was pleasant until you realized that it never made it to his remaining eye. “Loki will stay with Stark. The contract will be honored and should something happen to Loki or his host... Be very sure I will get to the bottom of it if I have to level this city and pay a personal... if very short visit to you and every member of this so called World Security Council.”

Fury was almost beside himself listening to the cordially issued threat. The only thing keeping him from shooting Odin and causing an interplanetary incident was Coulson again whispering urgently in his ear.

“Have I made myself clear?” The head god asked.

“Yes your Majesty,” Coulson said, since Nick looked incapable of speech at the moment.

“However, Stark told me about the geas against discussing or allowing your son to know anything about his first visit here. I’m not sure how that is going to work the longer he is here. He’s already come in contact with half a dozen people like my agent and Victor Von Doom, who might have told him about it accidentally.” Coulson shrugged. “After all, you can’t bind the whole country to secrecy, nor punish the country if someone who doesn’t know about the restriction tells him about something that he isn’t supposed to know. We would feel more comfortable if he were in one of our secure locations. After all, we wouldn’t want an accidental slip to cause an interplanetary incident.”

“Which we could avoid if he was in Shield custody, in a much more remote location with trained guards.” Fury ground out.

Thor tapped his lower lip with the side of his thumb and agreed. “Son of Coul is right father. I watched what happened on the tower roof, if not for the intervention of Stark’s Jarvis, this man Doom might have told Loki all of it.” Thor then scowled at Fury. “However Director Fury has already in the past asked me if I would assist him in torturing Loki. I would not trust him to keep my brother safe from harm.”

“Fuck people telling him stuff his daddy doesn’t want him to know. If word gets out that he is on the planet we’d be hard pressed to keep someone from killing him since bullets no longer bounce

off of his now mortal ass.”

If it was possible for Agent to have a pained expression, now would be the time for it. Tony could almost see Coulson cringing inside from Fury’s un-diplomatic tirade.

Thor started to hotly argue with Fury. Fury to give him credit totally ignored the god king standing in the room like the proverbial five hundred pound gorilla and went so far as to call Loki a psychotic little murderer.

“No.”

Just that. One syllable thrown out there like a percussion grenade and when it hit everyone turned towards Odin.

“Director Fury, while I will admit that Loki’s own foolish actions put him in a place where he was forced to assist in the attack on your planet, I do not hold him responsible for the majority of the damage done during that attack.” He looked thoughtful for a moment. “Having assured you of that, I wish to make it perfectly clear that if someone does kill this particular member of Asgard’s Royal family while he is on Midgard, the attack of the Chitauri will seem like damage done by an overly rambunctious puppy compared to what I will do. While Loki is currently in disgrace, please do not make the mistake of thinking he has no worth to Asgard.”

Okay... Well that certainly spiked Fury’s guns, but honestly Tony was just as stunned at the next person at that little bombshell.

Odin turned back towards the bed, “Thor, lay your brother on his stomach.”

“Whoa. Wait.” Tony protested, holding out an arm to keep Thor back. “Are you sure you want to move him, he’s been in a lot of pain.”

Fury’s happy little snort at the possibility of more pain in Loki’s future really pissed Tony off. While he maybe would have felt the same a few years ago he didn’t now.

Okay, so maybe Tony has done worse in the past by letting Loki’s various illnesses go untreated when he easily could have done something. But hey, he honestly feels kinda shitty about that now. And besides, even if he didn’t in the past, he now kinda maybe owes the guy... And... He is the one who would be stuck taking care of the Trickster god when they were all gone. As much as Tony can take care of anyone that is, since according to Pepper, the jury is still out on his ability to even take care of himself. But at any rate, a freshly injured godling is not something he wants to deal with any more than he had to. The guy did help him protect his tower after all...

“Calm yourself Anthony Stark, Loki’s internal injuries have been healed; the movement won’t cause him any pain.” Odin said motioning Thor to proceed.

“Tony. You can call me Tony.”

In hindsight this is where Tony learned for sure which parental unit Loki had picked up his skill at double speak from.

While Thor certainly didn’t need any assistance with the man-handling part, Tony went to help anyhow. Using a towel so as not to touch anything and not looking at it so he didn’t hurl, Tony bundled all the wires and bloody guck filled tubes into a trashcan for some poor nurse to sort through later. He then made Thor wait a moment while he spread a couple of clean towels over the stains on the mattress before they flipped the sleeping god over. While they weren’t rough or anything, there was no way in hell that they could have avoided waking Loki up if this had been a

natural sleep.

Tony really hated magic.

Odin waved for Thor and Tony to go and stand beside Fury and Coulson. Standing beside the bed, he looked down at the younger god for a moment before folding the sheet, covering him to his hips. Now that it wasn't covered with bruises, cuts and dressings Loki's skin was once again flawless.

"Look Odin--" Fury began.

"I will have silence," Odin said in a mildly meditative voice without even glancing their way.

"Really?" Fury sarcastically retorted taking a step towards the bed, "And I will have answers—"

Odin made the smallest of hand movements towards the angry director, before turning a pleased look upon a silenced, frozen Fury. "Really," he told them pleasantly tilting his head slightly. Odin appeared to be amused by the small twitches that were all that Fury could manage. There was a small disturbance in the air and a long thin blade appeared in the god's hand. It was some sort of dark metal, but the edge had a wicked glitter none the less.

For a second Tony thought that Odin was going to use the black dagger to stab Fury. And quite frankly he was pretty conflicted about that. On one hand he didn't like Odin, but on the other hand stabbing Fury would be a step in the right direction as far as changing Tony's opinion of Odin for the better. After all, someone stabbing Fury was long overdue. Coulson started, but Thor restrained him from pulling a gun or taking any other hostile action by wrapping one of his big hands around the SHIELD agent's right bicep. Tony could have sworn that Odin smirked at Coulson just before he turned back to the bed. After Coulson got a grip on his self Thor let go, gently patting the agents shoulder in apology.

The black knife glittered in the air another moment; then unexpectedly Odin began making small cuts on Loki's back.

"Hey!" Tony yelped before Thor's big hand was clapped over his mouth and he was hauled back against the Thunderer's chest, Thor's other arm wrapped across Tony's chest keeping him from pulling away. With the upper half of his body pretty well immobilized. Squirming unsuccessfully to slip out of his grip, Tony kicked as best he could, trying anything to get Thor to let him go.

It was like kicking a sequoia, Tony thought as absolutely nothing happened apart from Tony's heels getting bruised.

"Tony, stop. You need to calm down before you anger the All Father," The blonde rumbled in his ear. Thor ignored his muffled screams and the angry glare Tony shot him from the corner of his eye.

Apparently oblivious to the consternation behind him, Odin was using the wickedly sharp dagger like it was some sort of fucking marking pen and writing across the whole of Loki's back. Line after line of some language Tony couldn't read was cut into the younger god's back, thin trails of blood flowed freely, dripping down and soaking into the towels underneath him.

Odin continued to make cuts on Loki's back for about ten minutes more, with Thor maintaining his grip on Tony the whole time. Carving a freaking dissertation on his kids back was bad... But it was nothing compared to what happen next.

Odin was right. Turning Loki hadn't hurt him, hell Odin carving the Gettysburg Address into the

youngest god's back didn't appear to hurt him, but just as Odin was about to run out of back to carve on he stopped. The knife disappeared and Odin made a few weird finger puppet motions with his hands over Loki's back and the bloody incisions started to smoke.

The air was instantly filled with the stench of burning flesh as the skin around each letter charred; Loki's back arched and his eyes flew open, his entire face contorted into a silent scream of agony. The letters turned black and then deep red with gold shadows shimmering above them. Neck tendons straining, Loki's fingers scratched on the sheet, tearing at them as incandescent white light started streaming from the cuts joining the red letters to the floating gold ones. Violent convulsions almost threw Loki off the bed as the molten gold letters seemed to settle onto Loki's back. Each letter was now outlined with a fiery white that kept intensifying, making Tony's eyes water as he tried without much success to see what was happening. It got so bright that Tony could barely see the gold letters searing into Loki back. Then the streaming light suddenly went supernova completely blinding Tony.

Holy crap! Shit head did not just use molten metal to magic something into his kid's back?! Okay, so Loki was adopted, but still!

OoooO

Thor had not let go of Tony. This was fortunate because his large hand was still muffling Tony's screams. And Tony was screaming some shit that would have Odin All Fucker smiting the mouthy mortal into a smoking cinder. How was this even possible? Why the hell would Odin spend all that time healing Loki only to pull crap like this?

As the spots blocking Tony's vision cleared, he could see Loki lying like a rag doll, hanging limply half off the bed where his violent convulsions had thrown him. Tony was still thinking and very much verbalizing lots of nasty thoughts about the Asgardian Cyclops when he became aware of Thor hissing urgently in his ear.

"Man of Iron you have to stop! You have to control your speech before I can let you go." Using the arm around Tony's chest the god lifted and shook Tony, trying to get his attention as he admonished him. "Calm yourself! I have to go and help Loki. I can't do that until I can let go of you and be assured that you won't make matters worse by speaking out of turn." Thor's rough voice whispered. Exasperated, Thor turned him around as easily as a child would a doll. Bringing his one hand up to cup the back of Tony's head so he could maintain pressure on Tony's mouth with the other the god stared warningly down at him before leaning forward to growl directly into Tony's ear. "You must stop. You will do nobody any favors if you insult the All Father."

Tony of course replied by punching Thor repeatedly as the god muffled his screams of where Tony thought the fucking All Father could go and what anatomically impossible things he could do when he got there. He did not spend three god damn days sitting at someone's bedside to have them branded with white hot magic metal!

"My friend, if I have to knock you out so that I can go and help my brother I will. You are trying my father's patience to dangerous levels and I am running out of time." Thor hissed directly into his ear. He leaned back away from Tony enough to stare at him intently. "You must quiet yourself, do you understand my friend? Can you be silent?"

As much as it pissed him off to have to bite his tongue, he didn't see how having Odin smite him would help in any way. And no, Tony did not want to have his brains rattled by the some muscle bound moron smacking his skull with their meaty fist. So yes. Under those circumstances Tony could shut up.

Still glaring at the big blonde who was so effortlessly restraining him, Tony sullenly nodded once.

“Are you sure?” Thor’s brow rose questioningly, his skepticism that Tony could actually manage to restrain himself clearly written on the god’s face.

Tony rolled his eyes. Yes he was fucking sure. Thor hesitantly moved his hand a few inches away, watching him. Tony made a face and huffed, “I’m all over this Point Break, go see to your brother.”

OoooO

Thor gathered up the once again comatose Loki and settled him back in bed.

Odin shot Tony an amused look that left him steaming before waving a hand towards Fury.

“Director Fury, you must not let me detain you. I imagine you have many tasks awaiting you.” Fury worked his jaw a moment, most likely to verify that he could move it, before setting it belligerently.

“Just answer me this, how long is your psychotic son going to be here on Earth?”

“That will depend on many things Director Fury, but I will make sure you are notified when he leaves. Until then, I think it would be in your best interests to make sure no harm comes to him.”

“Oh yeah.” Fury spat. “Because coddling the little bastard is what I love to do with my time.”

It was Thor’s horrified expression that warned Tony to step further away from Fury.

“Whatever crimes you may feel lay at his door know this Director Fury, his birth was not dishonorable. Nor is he descended from low common stock.” Odin retorted in a cold disdainful tone, the words ‘unlike you’ were unspoken, but clearly understood by all. “For so long as his brother is treated correctly, you may call upon Thor in times when this city is in peril or when you cannot protect your planet without him. I have told Anthony Stark how to communicate with Asgard in times of need, so he can pass on your requests... If he deems them reasonable.”

Oh well now that was going to go over like a brick balloon.

“Now you need to leave us. I would like to speak to the Son of Stark in private.”

Oh no he didn’t just say that!

But while Tony did a little private fuming at Odin for making a bad funny at his expense, damned if the head god didn’t just turn his back on Fury. The look of surprise morphing into rage on that eye patched face was so priceless that Tony pretty much forgot his own ire and cursed fate that Jarvis was not at a good angle to get a picture of Fury’s departure. Hell he almost felt like giving the elder god a high five for putting SHIELD’s number one bastard in his place.

Fortunately, whatever Coulson was whispering in Fury’s ear seemed to work its magic. With a nasty curl of his lip Fury spun abruptly, leather coat flaring and strode out of the room. If not for Coulson following behind him Tony was sure Nick would have slammed the door so hard it bounced.

“You’re not going to smite me are you?” Tony asked when Odin gestured for him to come closer.

“No Anthony Stark,” The god assured him with a smirk and a hint of dark laughter in his voice.

“But I did consider it.”

“Of course you did,” Tony retorted. “So.... What’s up?”

“I confess to a curiosity. My wife tells me she has only ever made one payment for Loki’s incarceration. Why is that?”

“What, you don’t know?” Tony asked tossing a skeptical look at old scary dude. “I thought you were all seeing, with Heimdude or your birds or the throne of voyeurism.”

While his expression didn’t change, the skin on Odin’s face did tighten, his smirk losing its mirth and becoming more reminiscent of a grimace. If Tony needed more of a clue that he might be treading on dangerous ground, Thor’s pause from cleaning up Loki to glare meaningfully at him would have alerted him.

“According to the contract we can only check once a day, for a few moments.”

Tony was amazed. “Really, you don’t cheat and sneak some extra peeks?” Thor groaned. “What?” Tony demanded. “Seriously not even once?”

Who knew? Apparently contracts were taken very seriously on Asgard. Well Loki had mentioned that to him, but come on. Really? And since the five minute peek rule was being scrupulously adhered to, it meant that when Loki wasn’t where he normally was, Heimdud couldn’t look for him for longer than five minutes a day. It also meant the guy was scary good if it only took him fifteen minutes spread out over three days to find Loki. Something Tony really did need to remember. Something else he needed to remember was how quickly Heimdude could scramble the Asgardian Head Cheese in case of an emergency.

Anyhow when he was done being surprised and explained how Loki had become self-supporting, then it was Odin’s chance to be amazed.

He remained in deep thought even while renewing Tony’s servitor mark for another year. As Tony covered the mark with a modified suit cuff, which suited his look better than the wide watch band he had previously used, Odin finally roused himself to ask, “This was his idea?”

Not liking the undertones of that question Tony hurried to assure him that he had nothing to do with the younger god’s decision to open a laundry. “Well yeah. I certainly didn’t suggest it to him.”

“Humf.” Frowning Odin went to stand by the bed, where Thor had almost finished cleaning his brother up, to the extent of even stripping the bloody, then bloody sheets off the bed and replacing them with a few thin blankets that had been lying on the back of the recliner. Who knew Point Break was so good at nursing?

“He had always concerned himself with Frigga’s wellbeing,” Odin mused almost absent mindedly, tapping the lowered bed rail with the shank of his large gold ring.

While Tony and Thor exchanged glances, Odin shook off whatever thoughts had been distracting him. “Come Thor, it is time for us to leave.”

“What!” Tony yelled leaping to block the door. “Oh no you don’t. He scowled, ignoring Thor’s gestures clearing indicating that Tony needed to shut it. “You can’t leave, not yet!”

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Mister Tony of New York

Chapter Summary

Happy comes through in spades and Tony realizes an ambition he never knew he had.

Chapter Notes

So... Not my longest chapter, and still very transition-y. *Le Sigh*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 35 Mister Tony of New York

“Well hello, Sleeping Beauty. So glad you could rejoin us. As soon as you’re fully awake, you can get dressed and we can go home.”

Tony wanted to laugh. Loki kept blinking his eyes and looking at him and then all around the room with a complete ‘What the Fuck’ look.

Slowly, in case the god wasn’t as out of it as he seemed, Tony leaned slightly over the bed to cradle the side of Loki’s now perfectly healed face. “Hey, you with us yet?” Tony asked gently tapping a thumb on Loki’s cheek before turning Loki’s face towards him.

With a little furrow of concentration between his brows, the trickster’s eyes stopped blinking. Eyes fluttering at half-mast they seemed to search Tony’s face for an instant before they slid shut.

“Hey, hey. None of that. Eyes on me buddy. Tony admonished with quiet amusement, patting Loki’s cheek to get him to reopen his eyes and then after a moment again to recall his wandering attention.

“Sta--rk?” Loki asked as if there was some debate about Tony’s identity.

“Yeah. Stark. Hey, you awake yet?”

“Awake?” Loki tried to look around the room again, but Tony didn’t let go of his face so his field of vision was greatly reduced and his eyes returned to Tony that much faster.

“That blinking shit is making me twitchy. Hang on a minute.” Tony said releasing the god’s face and stepping into the bathroom a minute.

Turning on the hot water Tony took a fresh washcloth from the stack, wetting and wringing it out several times before folding it into a pad and just skimming a bit more hot water across the face of it. Tony had no clue how All-Father Voodoo healing differed from the glowing coma healing trick, he wondered if perhaps Odin hadn’t done it right? Loki seemed to be taking a lot longer to come to his senses than he had when he first time he’d been healed. Or perhaps it was that the injuries were worse this time? More internal issues? Or maybe magic healing was like recharging a battery? A fast charge was never as good as an all-night trickle charge?

All Tony knew was that the last time he'd been healed, it took Wack God only about an hour from the time he started waking up until he was trying to beat feet out the door. It had been twice that long this time and Lokemiester was still not all there.

Not that Tony admitted that Loki ever had been, not totally, but still...

Tony came back and stood by the bed, tucking a towel he'd snagged on the way out of the bathroom under Loki's cheek and neck. "Let's see if this helps." Tony gently pressed the warm wet wash cloth across Loki's eyes, ignoring the huffed protests. After about a half a minute, he began gently wiping each eye from the inside edge to the outside, refolding the washcloth every wipe or so to use a clean surface. Loki was sputtering by the time he removed the towel from where it had been catching drips to pat the god's face dry.

"Aghhh. Stark." Loki's turned his head and feebly pushed at Tony's hand in protest.

"I know rougher than sand paper huh? What can I tell you? Hospitals are all the same. Well at least here on Earth anyhow. Rough towels, stiff sheets, rotten food, not that you've gotten to eat any of it. Oh and thin hard pillows."

Loki blinked a time or two more, but then to Tony's initial satisfaction the excessive blinking seemed to stop. Unfortunately the godling was still not really tracking what was going on and despite Tony's best efforts, he drifted off to sleep again.

OoooO

"Tony, I really can't keep them out of here too much longer." Bruce told him apologetically, slipping into the room fresh from a battle with the head nurse. "I think it would be best if we just dressed him ourselves and popped him in a wheelchair so we can leave."

Laying back as far as he could in his station chair without tipping it over, Tony sighed. "You're right." He said, running his fingers through his hair. "I don't know how we're going to do this anyhow without a lot of comment. I was just hoping he could help with a bit of theatrical moaning while we relocated him to a 'private hospital.'" More than that Tony wanted him to be awake enough to know what was going on. He didn't want him waking up mid-transfer and freaking everyone out by being completely healed and trying to escape in his confusion.

"Is that what your penthouse guest room is called these days?" Bruce laughed at Tony's disgusted snort. "Look, just call your car and start gathering all your stuff up. I'll take care of this." Bruce told him grabbing a clean pair of Tony's loose sweats and flipping the blanket back.

"Yeah okay. You're probably better at it than I am anyhow. I only know how to undress pretty people. That I can do really well. This covering up pretty people when they're already naked? It's just so... wrong." Wrinkling his nose and smiling at Bruce's amused snort Tony went over to grab his phone and laid it closer to where he was packing so he didn't forget it. "Jarvis, call Happy."

"I have already informed him, sir." Jarvis' voice coming from a cell phone speaker sounded strange, so much less robust. However there was nothing wrong with his efficiency. "He will be here to personally assist in getting Mister Odinson past Captain Rogers and Agent Sitwell."

"You going to tell them what happened?" Bruce asked curiously, adjusting the sweat pants before slipping socks on to the soundly sleeping god.

"Naw. Let Fury tell them."

"Fury doesn't know about the second healing though, or what the whole back thing was all about."

Tony snorted in annoyance. “Well I wasn’t letting the bastard bounce him around like that without checking one more time to see if he had injured something from having that stupid ‘Hear No Evil’ crap burned into his back. You should have seen the way he was flailing around. Odin did end up fixing some deep bruising and a dislocated wrist. Although amazingly enough there weren’t any marks left on his back for Odin to fix.” Not that Odin had taken very kindly to his insistence. “Anyhow, I dare say I’ll be hearing from Fury by tomorrow at least, if not tonight.”

“He has already called and left a message for you, sir. He wanted you to call him as soon as Thor and his father left.”

“See, he wants to talk to me tomorrow,” Tony said cheerfully as he stuffed his tablet into a tote along with the items he personally was taking back to the tower. “Jarvis, make sure Happy brings the cuff up with him. Oh, and make sure the guards follow the drill and take everything in this room that has blood or fluids on it down to the medical incineration room and watch while they burn it. Hell, take everything including the pillows. Fuck sorting out the wires from that mess in the trash can, just burn them too. And make sure they tip the attendants that have been accommodating us. Remind them to watch the sanitizing crew, make sure they’re thorough and tip them too.”

“Cuff?” Bruce asked, slipping a clean t-shirt over the god’s head and adjusting it.

When he didn’t say anything, Bruce glanced over giving him a questioning look. Tony just shrugged and nodded.

“Ah. Well come hold his foot up so I can stick this brace back on him. I assume you don’t want any questions about his miraculous recovery correct?”

OoooO

Instead of a wheelchair, Happy had showed up with a medical gurney and a couple of EMT’s. They wore ball caps pulled low so that no one would notice that this afternoons EMT’s had actually stood guard in the hallway on the previous day. Oh, Sitwell did and he nudged Rogers but other than that, they had Loki loaded and tightly strapped down and were out the door before anyone else paid them any attention. Tony left the guards currently on duty to supervise the rest of the packing up and closing down of the room per the instructions Jarvis sent to them.

Tony, Bruce and Loki had made it all the way to the parking lot before the unit’s charge clerk had caught up to them. She was breathless from running and waving the discharge papers she wanted Tony to sign. Which Tony did while Bruce and Happy supervised loading the gurney into the back of a real ambulance. Thrusting the papers back at the woman, Tony hopped into the back of the ambulance joining Bruce, Happy and the still sleeping Loki and closed the doors in the flustered woman’s face. As the ambulance pulled away, Tony waved cheerfully to the clerk standing there in confusion with her paperwork clutched to her chest.

“Impressive.” Bruce said quietly, cleaning his glasses and smiling at the head of Stark Tower security.

“Yeah. Really great, Happy. How’d you manage this?” Tony asked with a wave of his hand, looking around at the inside of the ambulance as they pulled out of the hospital’s drive heading towards Stark Tower.

Not able to keep the large smug smile from his face, Happy shrugged his shoulders and said modestly. “This is an older ambulance they use for training and neighborhood relations, it spends a lot of time sitting in the corner of Battalion One’s parking lot. I wanted to borrow it for a few

hours; the Fire Chief wanted a box of Iron Man swag to donate to various neighborhood raffles. So we made a deal. I loaded a big box up from the supply room and threw in a few of the autographed battle suit scraps and damned if I don't have use of a real ambulance until one o'clock this afternoon. I also threw in two of the life sized cardboard standups and got use of some EMT outfits." He and Tony exchanged big grins.

"Really impressive then." Bruce said, his eyes twinkling with humor. "Wait... You autograph damaged suit parts?" Bruce asked Tony, looking at him over the tops of his glasses.

"I will have you know they are very collectible." Tony said, not even trying to keep the conceited expression off his face. "Minus all the electronics of course and only the stuff too damaged to be recycled into another suit."

Bruce nodded. They sat in silence for several minutes, swaying occasionally when the ambulance changed lanes. They were just entering the business district when he looked past Tony. "I think 'Lorin' is waking up."

"Really? 'Bout time." Tony said, turning and laying his hand on the god's wrist and giving it a little shake. "Hey Lo! You feeling a little more awake? We should be home in about five minutes."

"Stark?" Loki's voice was a bit raspy, but better sounding than it had been since the roof attack. He shifted his shoulders slightly, his frown deepening when he couldn't move.

"Hello Mister Othinsson, my name is Harold Hogan, but you can call me 'Happy.' Everyone else does."

Loki lifted his eyes and was taken aback at the manic cheerfulness of the tall, slightly stocky man seated near his head. His brow knitted a bit as he regarded the large man that he had never seen before. Or maybe it was that Happy had used Loki's assumed last name of Othinsson. Something, that while the god might be aware of it, Tony doubted that he was used to hearing since anything done under that name would have been done by Jarvis.

"I'm head of Security for Mister Stark." Happy added, most likely thinking that Loki's frown was the god trying to place him.

"Ah." Loki winced a little as shafts of sunlight came in through one of the windows and landed on his face, but after several seconds they disappeared as they passed a large building on Loki's left. As soon as his eyes readjusted to the gloom, he turned his attention back to the new mortal. "Nice to meet you, Mister Hogan." The god said politely, giving him one last look before dismissing him from his attention. He turned his head towards Tony, asking him with more than a bit of edge in his voice, "Stark, why am I strapped down?"

OoooO

While it had been an unpleasant surprise to wake up strapped to a board, the reprieve from his previous agony was a more welcome development. Puzzling perhaps, since there were several ways that Loki could think that it could have occurred... and only one, and not even the most likely one, involved Midgardian healing methods. They were moving, so they had left the Healers Hall and were presumably headed back to Stark's Tower. When he opened his eyes, Loki had noted that both Stark and Doctor Banner were there so he didn't really worry too much when another mortal started addressing him in a manner he found far too cheerful. After covertly examining this 'Happy' person, Loki dismissed him as a near-time threat.

"Stark, why am I strapped down?" He finally demanded.

“Hey, look who’s decided to return to the land of the living.”

“Why Stark?” Loki asked again, sounding perhaps a bit more irritated than he actually was. After all, it wasn’t like the wretched mortal had ever really hurt him... Actively, that is. And he had been most attentive and even... kind when Loki was injured during the battle. However, long ago that was. Something he needed to find out as soon as he could speak to Stark without an audience. Shifting on the surface he was strapped to, he did notice that his ankle cuff was back on, although how well that would work without Jarvis or the Minion bot he couldn’t begin to guess.

Loki let his head drop back onto the hard pillow. Not that he was thinking of making a break for it, at least not at this time. Even discounting the fact that he could find himself punished with a far worse situation if he made an unsuccessful escape attempt. There was also the fact that if he was successful, his research had indicated that his only near time means of support would be preying on the weak. Something that would only be even marginally acceptable if he was escaping from dire straits... Which he would not be. He might be kept in a cage, but the bars were... Metaphorically at least, gilded.

“Safety. It’s how people are usually transported when they are unconscious.” Stark answered cheerfully. Loki had to think a second before he could recall the question Stark was answering. “Besides, it reassured Cap and Sitwell that you were restrained and not in immediate danger of taking a runner.”

Loki’s brows furrowed in confusion. But before he could ask Stark to explain he did. “Umm, two of Fury’s stooges. Like Natasha, but not as good looking and with less knives.”

When they finally arrived back at the tower, Loki realized that it didn’t matter that he’d been restrained, since almost the first thing he did when they untied him was sink dizzily to the floor of the transport after only a few steps. “Don’t worry.” Banner, who had been behind him said patting his shoulder. “Tony, un-rack that wheelchair. I don’t think Lorin is going to be up for much walking for a few days.”

Loki would have been deeply embarrassed that Stark and the others had witnessed such weakness... If he hadn’t been so desperately busy trying to swallow the bile that had risen up in his throat. Banner stepped around Loki to help Tony get the wheelchair unhooked and lifted down.

“Hey at least you’re not still in traction, so even being able to take a couple of steps is a minor miracle.” The stocky man, Happy, said consolingly as he crouched down behind him. “Do you think if I helped you we could get to the door? Or would you rather wait for me and Mister Stark to lift you?”

The mortal reared back a bit when confronted by the malice in the stare Loki tossed him, but rather than try to stand up again, Loki decided to scoot the last few feet. While perhaps not as dignified, it did save him from the fatigue of getting all the way up again just to try and step down without falling. As an added bonus, this way at least he ended up sitting in the exit door and was able to pivot into the wheelchair Banner positioned beside him without much more than a guiding hand.

“Okay... Maybe not the blanket,” Stark said of the woven cover he had been about to place over Loki’s lap, having deduced how welcome it would be by the sour look he received. “Sorry, it’s kind of a Earthgadian tradition when you ride in one of these,” Stark said, tossing it back up into the transport before bouncing away toward the elevator.

“Sir, while Mister Odinson was so injured, I took the liberty of having some of the mobility assistance aids that I thought might be useful placed in the penthouse. In light of his present

fatigue, it might be best to leave them there until we are sure they aren't needed." Jarvis said as the elevator doors opened and a sleek, tricked out red and silver motorized wheelchair was sitting beside the door.

Stark laughed delightedly. "I forgot about that damn thing," he crowed sneaking a peek at Loki as he threw himself into it and spun it in a few circles in the entry hall. "Pepper ordered this for me the last time I had a dislocated knee. It's souped-up of course and I stuck the custom chrome accents on it." Straightening it up, Stark rocketed it down the hall. "Come on Bruce, catch me if you can!"

Shaking his head and chuckling Banner followed at a much more sedate speed. "You want to rest now or get a shower and then rest?" he asked.

Since Loki could smell old blood and sweat that he was fairly sure didn't belong to Doctor Banner, he opted to wash first. Despite the problems he'd had getting out of the vehicle, the shower was a breeze. Jarvis had a free standing metal support frame work installed in the large walk in shower. There was a bench built into one side of the support. After he was seated in the shower, Stark parked the red chair close by for when he emerged, and draped some sleep trousers and towels over one of its arms. "I'll wait outside, just tell Jarvis if you need any help okay."

"I'll be fine Stark. I'm not injured anymore, I'm just a little tired." Loki retorted testily as he began to slowly undress, tossing his clothes over the opposite arm of the chair. He was fine but filthy he discovered a few minutes later watching the brownish tinged water run into the drain as he wet his hair to wash it. While he didn't have any injuries anywhere, his skin was stained here and there with some Midgardian solution that must have been used to wash his wounds. He managed to wash most of it off, but there were a few shadows of it left on his stomach and ankle.

By the time he had dried off and slipped on the simple pants left out for him, Loki was more tired than he could remember being in a long time. His earlier determination to ignore the self-powered chair was reluctantly discarded. He was lucky he had the strength to stand. The extra few steps and the moment it took to position himself for a controlled fall into the chair were exhausting. Loki reluctantly concluded that for the near future at least, walking more than a step or two was going to be completely out of the question. Too tired to hunt for a brush, he simply wrapped a towel around his shoulders to catch any stray drips as he did a much abbreviated finger combing to get his hair out of his face.

The controls on the chair were very simple and Stark had left the door ajar so he made it into the bedroom without any trouble.

"Hey! You made it. Good for you." Stark said getting up from the side chair he'd been sitting it. "I bet you feel a ton better. I know I always do, getting a shower after days of just sponge baths."

"Yes, thank you." Loki replied faintly, heading straight for the bed. He was exhausted and while he was anxious to know how exactly he had been healed he was just too tired to care right now. Thor, healing stones and several days' worth of attempts figured largely as the most likely scenario. He didn't ask however since he felt like he was about to drop and really just wanted nothing more than to get into the bed.

"Bruce went down to get his medical bag, he wants to do a quick check." Stark looked at him shrewdly. "I figured you were too tired to fuss with your hair so I went and snagged these." He said holding up a brush and a few cloth loops. "Pepper left them behind. If you can just sit here another minute I can get that hair of yours under control." Placing the bands on the bedside table and not really waiting for an answer, Stark quickly sectioned Loki's hair off and then started working the wide bristled brush through the first section.

Loki twisted his head irritably, pushing the brush away with his hand. "Leave it alone Stark, I am not a maiden who needs help with her hair." Glaring over his shoulder he continued stingingly, "Nor are you by any means comely enough to be a ladies maid."

Looking like an obnoxious teenager, Tony's mouth twisted into a 'make me' smirk. Brown eyes held green eyes a moment before Stark deliberately reached over and grabbed a section of hair pulling Loki's head to the position he wanted to work on it. "I'll have you know I am more than good looking enough to be any ladies maid. I was named *People's Sexiest Man Alive* five times." Using the hank of hair in his hand, Stark pulled Loki's head back and looked down at him. "Five times on the cover, that good enough looking for you, sport?"

"Oh I do apologize, Stark." Loki said, tired but amused at the vain little mortal, he heavily ladled on the sarcasm. "Obviously you are a gift from the heavens for maidens everywhere. What was I thinking?"

"Apparently you weren't or you would have known that," Stark retorted, running the brush through a small section of Loki's damp hair. "And we are going to brush and braid this otherwise you'll be sleeping on it wet and it will dry into one hell of a rat's nest by morning." Stark paused a moment to work a large snarl out with his fingers. "Last time I was injured, I almost required a buzz cut to get rid of the matting by the time I got out of the hospital. Your hair is so fine that if we wait any longer we'll never get the knots out." He tugged lightly on the piece he was currently brushing. "So you down with the program, then?"

"If by that, do you mean will I let you continue? By all means. I would never want to stand in the way of a grown man's ambition to be a handmaiden."

Tony tugged his head back again, grinning down at him. "Fuck you."

"In your dreams, Stark," Loki said looking up at him with tired eyes and waving his hand languidly. "Please continue. Far be it from me to thwart you in pursuit of your obvious calling."

It took a while, with Stark frequently having to use just his fingers to get the bigger knots out of Loki's hair. His hair had been long when he arrived on Midgard and it was now down to the middle of Loki's back. While Stark was busy brushing, Loki's thoughts wandered awhile. Probably the last time his hair had been this long was over five centuries ago during the Battle of Lena. It had taken Thor the better part of the morning to get the knots out after the battle was over.

"It's nice to know that even your hair is psychotic." Stark said, recalling Loki from the half sleep he had slipped into. "It has a fine texture but there is a ton of it and it's curly but with a silky texture. Normally, hair like this is one or the other and flyaway to boot. Not both and almost never all of them."

"Hummm?" Loki answered not really willing to open his eyes and completely wake up while the brush worked the last strands as smooth as they could get without Loki using magic or a pomade of some sort to tame his curls.

"Well isn't this domestic." Banner drawled from the doorway.

"Brucie, pull up a chair, you're next. I think I see you in more of a tousled curl look than braids." Tony waved the hair brush in a lazy circle while making a fruity face and sending a pursed lipped air kiss his way.

"I think I'll pass, but thanks. You doing okay there Loki? You look like you're about to fall asleep."

Loki's only response was a hummpf, but Banner didn't press for anything more.

"Give me one more minute." Tony told him quickly, separating Loki's hair into three sections and starting a tight braid.

"Not bad, Tony." Bruce said, ignoring the chair Tony had pointed him to and sitting on the bed in front of Loki and looking over his glasses at them. "You play with dolls much as a kid?"

"Funny Bruce, but I will have you know complicated weapon system prototypes often have hand braided wires while you are working out the specifications."

"Why?"

"Same reason we braid hair, keeps everything neat and out of the way." Tony said, giving one last tug to the braid and twisting a hair tie tightly around it. "Okay. Done, let's get you in bed so Bruce can take a look at you."

That's right, Loki recalled, Stark had made weapons before he turned to other technologies. Loki had observed that Stark in the main was much less aggressive when he was not wearing his armor; he wondered what he had been like when he was designing weapons rather than wearing them.

While it didn't hurt to move onto the edge of the bed, Loki felt incredibly weak. Part of him was mortified that he had to be helped into bed like a tired child, but the other part of him was just so fatigued he really couldn't find it in himself to care when Stark put an arm around his back and another under his knees as he sat on the edge of the bed. Loki tried to help when Stark lifted his legs, but he doubted if any of his movements helped as the smaller man pivoted and lowered him onto the pillows.

Loki felt the blanket being drawn up over him and half heard Banner ask him a question, but he didn't catch it all and didn't care enough to even stay awake long enough to ask Banner to repeat himself.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. May thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

This chapter was Beta'd by ReindeerGames19. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Playing Nurse, but not in the fun way.

Chapter Summary

Tony has enough problems coping with a recovering god, he does not need Fury's crap right now.

Chapter Notes

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

Our story so far for those of you just tuning in... Tony and Frigga make the deal, bribes are offered and accepted, Pepper is not happy, neither apparently is Odin. Loki's physical injuries are cured but his mental issues are causing new ones. Tony is meh, Bruce and Pepper get excited about them. Oh and Loki makes a break for freedom and does a little freefall, Tony is very much not amused. Loki takes issue with Tony's accounting practices and starts his own prison work shop. Mom saves money, but Tony can't get any new material. The Loki Exercise channel is a big hit... at least with Tony. Fury comes to visit. He wants to know who is behind publishing company with ties to Stark Industries. Fury is curious about the political, scientific and historical writing. The bridge crew of the HeliCarrier just want to know when the sequel to a certain smut filled bodice ripper will be released. Phil is not amused. After much delay Tony goes to talk to Loki and offers him a teaching position and then gets freaked out by a demonstration of exactly how easily Loki is able to write racy material. Ummm, Natasha dropped in without an invite, Loki has been advised not to be a shit and neither Fury or Pepper are happy with each other right now.

The tower is attacked and Loki decides to ensure his own safety. He may be without his powers, but he isn't totally powerless ya know. Except for the fact that Doom heard Jarvis refer to him as 'Odinson' and sent a doom bot to snag him. With no powers and an already broken foot Loki was starting to get a little worried. Then something stuck the doom bot causing his ankle to be crushed right as he was torn out of it grip to fall to his certain death. Except he didn't Tony plowed into the bot rescuing but further injuring the god. Despite attempts by Fury to have him sent to a SHIELD facility Loki ended up in Brooklyn, Odin and Thor eventual showed up, Loki was healed without him ever seeing the pair and Tony took him back to the tower to recover in the penthouse.

Whew! This chapter? Much fluffth. I don't know why, it just happens sometimes.

Chapter 36 – Playing Nurse, but not in the fun way.

Odin had said that Loki would be tired and he wasn't kidding. It was a major effort to get the Trickster up, and once he was up, he didn't stay awake for very long. In self-defense Tony had become quite skilled at trying to get everything done as quickly as possible. One good thing was that if Tony slept in, Loki didn't even realize it. The bad thing of course was how pissy Bruce got if Loki hadn't completed his morning routine... or worse hadn't started by the time the doctor got to the Tower around eleven.

If Bruce had been the one having to get a somnolent god awake, washed, dressed and fed Tony doubts that he would be doing much better. Okay, so maybe a little better. Well for at least the first week anyhow. But for not being Bruce the pathological, Tony honestly didn't think he was doing too bad.

"Come on Loki, time to get up." Tony cajoled, alternating between threats of eating all the pistachio pudding himself, a hollow threat since he loathed the stuff, and promises of a shoulder rub after his hair was brushed if he got up right now. Fortunately one or the other usually worked, although this morning the god had drowsily demanded chocolate pudding with caramel sauce.

"Yes, yes. Alright. Fine. But only if you get up right now." Tony said, rolling his eyes to the heavens and wondering if physics breakthroughs were really worth all this fuss. They were, but still... Crap. Loki made no attempt to get up and instead burrowed deeper into his mink blanket.

Ah. Tony had seen this trick before and was well versed in the way that the god used to delay getting up. "I'm not ordering your pudding until you're sitting on the edge of the bed. So unless you want it for dinner, rather than breakfast..." The fur shifted a bit and one sleepy green eye peeped out, trying to gauge how serious the engineer was.

Tony put on his best '*I am so not putting up with your shit*' face and glared down at the god.

Loki's thin fingers pulled the black fur up so he could hide his face beneath it.

Tony was just about to start trying heavy duty bribes since pudding related threats apparently weren't going to work today when Loki sighed deeply, pushed his blanket aside and rolled over to the edge of the bed.

Moving not unlike a five year old high on codeine cough medicine, one very heavy eyed, half naked god scooted to the side of the bed and slowly sat up. For a certain value of 'up' as it pertained to something that swayed that much as it stretched. Blinking heavily, a behavior Tony now recognized as Loki trying to rouse himself enough to speak coherently, the god stumbled into his chair.

"Pudding," Loki mumbled.

"Jarvis?"

"I've called the dining room sir. They will have breakfast and fresh pudding here within an hour."

Loki paused the chair on the way to the bathroom to rub his eyes with the heels of his hands and yawn a few times. Eyes drifting shut, Loki wiped his face with his hands before tucking them under his chin.

"Oh no you don't," Tony said. He tugged on Loki's braid to make him open his eyes and worked

the controls, driving the chair into the bathroom. "Let's go you, we're running out of time. Chop, chop and all that." Tony placed a set of black cotton jersey knit pants and a matching long sleeved shirt on the edge of the unused sink. All of Loki's toiletries were in a basket hanging off the mobility bars in the shower, since standing at the sink was something they didn't want to risk just yet.

"If I don't hear that shower starting in five minutes, I am coming in to see what the problem is." Tony chided him. "And I hope I don't have to tell you that finding you sleeping on the commode again will not be the high point of my day."

Loki rolled his head back bonelessly to look up at Tony. "Once Stark," he said, with only a hint of a slur.

Good, he was finally waking up. "Hey once was all it took to scar me for life. I am a billionaire; I don't normally play the part of the Sexy Nurse you know. Well okay, once just after college. But that was a weird time in my life so let's not go there."

Loki gave him an amused 'humpf' and waved for him to get out of the bathroom. Tony went out and sat in a chair by the door, taking up his tablet to run through his emails while the three ladies on the daylight crew that normally cleaned his apartment were sent in by Jarvis. They had already done the rest of the apartment while he slept and had started cleaning Tony's room the minute he had left it to try and wake up the god.

Normally Tony didn't see his cleaning ladies since they would go back down to clean on the executive floors while Tony was moving around in the penthouse. But it wasn't really a problem if his cleaning needs changed a bit, since his floor took precedence over anything else they did for the other floors.

"Morning ladies. Looking lovely as always," Tony said with a grin as they immediately started stripping the bed, emptying the trash, dusting and vacuuming. The mink blanket had caused more than a few sidelong glances on the first day, until a glare from Carol the crew's leader, had put a stop to that. Now they just bundled it carefully out of the way and got down to business. Not that he blamed them for taking notice of it. It was an impressive blanket, in a Peta-*contra* way. Jarvis had outdone himself in ordering it. The onyx black color and quality of the furs, coupled with the satin lining in the exact shade of green as the god's eyes, made it a truly magnificent indulgence. And apparently a well-received one at that, since Loki clutched it close every time he laid down on the bed. But it did cause Tony to wonder if perhaps Jarvis didn't have some secret unsated desire for more fashion design opportunities.

As the ladies chorused their good mornings, Tony once again considered the pros and cons of just permanently cutting Carol loose from the pack. After all he needed someone to take care of his laundry and ironing, since Loki wasn't going to be doing it anymore. And he wasn't about to go back to having his clothes trek across town before returning only semi-pressed to his closet. And maybe some light cooking down in the party kitchen for early dinners and perhaps a few things premade for the weekends, when the cafeteria and executive dining room were closed. Bruce had been most insistent that Loki couldn't be fed pizza and burgers all the time.

Truth be told, Carol might not be as skilled as SI's executive chef, but she was a pretty good cook in a *'somebody's mom'* kind of way.

"Will you be wanting your special wedding soup again this evening Mister Stark?" Carol asked.

"Carol I don't want that damn soup any evening. If god had intended for man to eat chicken, pasta spinach soup, he wouldn't have invented cheeseburgers." Carol shook her head and they

exchanged grins. “But since I am not the one who eats that crap, no insult to your cooking intended, let me check with the jerk who does.”

Tony stuck his head in the bathroom. Loki was sitting on the shower stool getting ready to brush his teeth. “Lo you want chicken soup again tonight for dinner?”

“No, soft eggs.”

“Nope. You’re having those for breakfast, pick something else.” The back of the motorized chair hid Loki’s personal bits, but Tony could still see the autocratic expression forming at the fact that a mere mortal was having the nerve to say ‘No’ to a god. Said god, who became quite high-handed when you contradicted him. It had amused Tony how Loki quite often reverted to extremely haughty Prince Loki when he was half-asleep and not paying attention.

But god or not. Prince of not. Loki still wasn’t getting eggs for dinner. Between soft eggs every morning and chicken soup at least once a day at lunch or dinner, the god was in danger of turning into a damn chicken. “What about noodles and those little Hawaiian meatballs you liked?”

Crabby Prince Loki morphed into thoughtful Loki, “White cheese?”

“Yes fine, now finish brushing your teeth and turn the damn shower on. Don’t make me call Bruce to help wrestle you in there.”

“I’m not washing my hair today.” Loki said scowling, face and voice channeling his defiant five year old.

Tony mentally rolled his eyes. “So skip a day, but shower now,” Tony commanded, ducking back out and closing the door before turning to face his very amused cleaning lady.

“I heard,” Carol said with a small smile.

“Well it’s about time he stops eating that damn soup at every meal... although it might not be a bad idea to have a cup or two in the fridge in case he changes his mind. Oh and make sure it’s a light alfredo sauce, nothing too heavy yet okay?”

Carol nodded and went back to dusting. Lord only knew what she and the other ladies thought of Tony Stark playing nurse maid to an invisible, to them, house guest.

OoooO

The ladies had left about five minutes before Loki rolled back out into the guest room. Tony waved the deity towards the kitchen before ducking in to get the brush and hair ties. Since it was dry, it didn’t take but a few minutes to brush and re-braid the god’s hair. Loki had tried doing it himself the day before, but he had moved so slowly that breakfast had already arrived before he was barely started. Tony had finally just snatched the brush off of Loki, ignoring his protests and finished the job himself. He was getting pretty good at it, and truth be told, he didn’t think Loki minded near as much as it was implied when he fussed. Particularly since he usually, like he was doing right now, tried to sneak in a quick nap while Tony was brushing and braiding it.

Tony had got everything in the living room ready before he retrieved the food cart from the elevator. He was able to set everything out on the kitchen table without Loki even stirring. Passing behind him on his way to hiding the pudding in the refrigerator, Tony tugged twice on his braid. “Yo. Sleeping Beauty. Up and at ‘em. Eggs. Eat them before they get cold.”

Loki blinked a few times and then picked up a piece of buttered toast. “You really need to quit

pulling on my hair Stark.” He said with a yawn.

“And you need to at least stay awake until you finish breakfast.” Tony retorted. If there was one good thing about this whole mess it was that Tony himself had been forced to make changes to his own eating and sleeping habits. Well good as far as Bruce and Pepper were concerned anyhow. The Kanker Sisters also liked that invalid care and alcohol did not mix. Not that Tony had tried to test that idea. Even he wasn’t that big an asshole. At least not usually.

“I don’t see my pudding.”

Tony ignored a glare that was pretty low grade compared to the ‘Crazy Loki Attack of New York’ ones that Tony had previously known and loathed... Or even his more recent ‘I Could Kill You If I Really Wanted To’ glares that the god had been tossing around prior to the accident.

Tony replied calmly. “Sorry grumpy god, your glare, she’s still not working. So no pudding for you until you eat breakfast and are set up in the living room.”

Loki made a truly praiseworthy attempt to up the wattage of his glare, but it still fell far short. “I will go back to bed after breakfast. I’m tired.” Loki said coldly, dropping the toast he had been about to eat on his plate, laying this hands palm flat on the table.

“You’re always tired now and have spent almost a solid week sleeping. Bruce wants you to start sitting up for a while during the day.” Had the god been his normal kick ass self, his tone and body posture would have had Tony edging towards a door or telling Jarvis to get ready. But Loki wasn’t currently healthy and in his fatigue he seemed to be willing to attempt methods of influencing Tony that ‘Healthy Loki’ would have died before trying.

Like pouting like a petulant five year old.

“That is so not going to work on me, so just stop it.” Not that Tony didn’t find it adorable as well as hilarious when Loki’s lower lip poked out.

Tony made the new hand sign that told Jarvis to capture multiple angles and save the pictures to his new ‘*Littlest God of Mischief*’ file. When Loki was back on his feet Tony was going to have a ball changing his screen saver and wallpaper pictures. He might even have a bunch printed and send them to Frigga with his yearend report as a New Year’s gift.

Wait for it.

Tony watched the god from the corner of his eye having to work hard to keep himself from snickering. And there it was, right on schedule.

Tony signaled and Jarvis snapped pictures of one mournful little toast nibbling deity. Dejectedly stirring a spoon through his bowl of soft boiled eggs, Loki with head hung low, sat there silently pleading with Tony to let him go back to bed. Peeping through the little wisps of hair that hung down over his forehead Loki's sorrowful, soulful, puppy dog eyes looked up at Tony.

All in all, Loki’s expression was so sad and pitiful that it should have been enough to melt the hardest of hearts. Unless of course the heart in question was protected by an arc reactor, which fortunately the engineer's was.

Tony rapped smartly on the table.

“Ooooh. Points for trying, but that one isn’t going to work either.”

The innocently dejected expression vanished instantly. Loki threw him a sour glance, snatching up and angrily biting off a piece of toast. “And there is the Mischief Maker we’ve all come to know and love.” He crowed, “Look Jarvis, he’s still here.”

“Indeed sir.”

Neither of them said much the rest of the meal. Tony was thinking about the stuff he had to work on that morning and Loki, having used up this morning ration of energy, was starting to slow down.

Despite the god’s protests, Tony did install Loki in the living room. And if he laid down on the couch the minute Tony left... Well he could at least tell Bruce he had tried. As far as Tony understood it, Loki’s body wanted to be in a healing coma right now, but Bruce was worried that without the weird green haze maintaining his body Loki would be subject to bed sores or pneumonia or who knows what else. Hence Tony having to make sure the guy moved whether he wanted to or not. Coherent interactions not necessary but worth bonus points with Bruce and Pepper.

“Here,” he said plopping the cup of pudding and a spoon into Loki’s hands before he spread the mink blanket over his lap. If you need anything let Jarvis know. Minion is on drink and bottle duty so you don’t need to get up for any reason.”

Tony fixed Loki with a very stern look. “Which means of course, don’t get up for any reason. Especially don’t get up unless someone is with you, your chair has a kill switch and Jarvis isn’t afraid to use it. Bruce will be up to see you in a few hours. Maybe you can talk him into letting you go back to bed. The TV remote and your tablet are on the end table, I’ll be down in my lab.” While Tony hoped Loki would stay awake and watch a little television or read, Tony was pretty sure it will be all Loki can do to stay awake long enough to finish his pudding. But hey... that was Bruce’s bitch not his.

OoooO

“So has Loki said anything?” Fury demanded several days later when Tony finally moseyed in to attend a debrief for Doom’s last attack. He’d already been yelled at by Hill for missing the initial post-attack meeting, what with being in the hospital and all.

“Hummm. Let me think. ‘Why isn’t my pudding on the table. Those pancakes are disgusting, I’m not eating them’. Oh and he threatened to kill me right before I left to come here.”

“Really?” Bruce looked thoughtful, “What was wrong with the pancakes?”

“They had blueberries in them and apparently looked and smelled repulsive. Obviously an offence to his princely palate. Who knew?”

“Oh.” Bruce said, turning back to the papers in front of him.

Tony leaned back in the station chair with a hurt expression, ignoring Clint’s disagreeable hiss. “Seriously Bruce, you’re curious about pancakes and not why he threatened to kill me?”

“Tony, I would be more curious if he or anybody else could go a whole day in your company without threatening to kill you.”

Tony looked at Bruce with mock outrage.

“Fine.” Bruce rolled his eyes. “Why did he threaten to kill you Tony?”

“Because I told him he had to stay up like you wanted him to. Why he doesn’t threaten to kill you I have no idea.”

“I would imagine the other guy has something to do with that. But since you managed to escape with your life, I assume it blew over.”

“Yep, I let him go back to bed, so here I am safe and sound.”

Bruce glared over the top of his glasses. “Tony! You know he has to get up and move.”

“Hey, I was leaving the building so this is safer. Hell, he won’t freaking move until dinner time. And only then if he decides my dessert selections are worthy of his consideration. I’m going to try to wean him off that disgusting pistachio pudding and onto something else. I think tonight we’re having a mixed berry crême brûlée.”

“Would you two shut up?” Fury demanded. “Stark that isn’t what I was asking about and you know it.”

“Hey, you said...”

Fury upped the intensity of his scowl.

Tony huffed in exasperation, “Look that is the gist of every conversation we have had since he got out of the hospital. His physical injuries were healed but the energy it took wiped him totally out. It’s like living with a coma patient. He’d never speak to me if he didn’t have to tell me what he wants for dinner.”

“Or perhaps it’s just a big trick?” Fury challenged, his one eye flashing dangerously.

“Well if it is it’s a really good one. I sat with him a few days last week,” Bruce took his glasses off and wiped them, peering at the lens and making a show of dismissing Fury’s concerns. “The guy has been so out of it that when he can keep his eyes open, which isn’t often, he just sits there and stares. Doesn’t turn on the television, hasn’t cracked open a book, nothing. I’d be scanning him for brain damage if it wasn’t for the fact that for the first twenty minutes or so after he wakes up from a nap he can coherently answer questions. But you better ask fast, because after that he just looks at you like you’re speaking gibberish.

“I think he’s mastered the art of sleeping with his eyes open,” Tony offered, now spinning his pen noisily across the table from one hand and to the other just to piss Fury off. “Hell just for mental stimulation I’ve been having Jarvis run the history channel for him during the day even if he looks like he’s sleeping.”

“So what was he doing on roof Stark? Did you ever find out?”

Tony snorted, “Of course I did Nick. What part of twenty-four seven surveillance do you not understand?” Predictably, Fury did not appreciate Tony’s sass. “His floor was one of the ones shot up during the attack, Jarvis allowed him to leave as long as he didn’t leave the building. Taser cuff remember. He chose to come up to the roof and see if he could help.” Which was true.... With a few important omissions that were not really any of Fury’s business.

Tony’s pasted on his best annoying smirk at Fury’s evident confusion. Not that Tony hadn’t felt the same confusion himself when he learned of how the god had actually convinced his AI to let him loose.

Silver tongue indeed.

“Oooh, and he was. A help that is. He got injured defending my employees and my building and is now sleeping like the dead, in his own bed, not on the couch despite what Bruce wanted and will remain there until it is time for his evening fucking chicken soup. Then after a cup of that crappy green pudding he likes, which I even hate the smell of... He will...” Looking at Fury, Tony widened his eyes dramatically.

“Wait for it...”

“Sleep.”

“Stark you know what he is, how can y--”

“Shut it Tweetie. When I want your opinion I’ll ask Natasha for it.” Tony snapped, his eyes throwing a dagger sharp look towards Clint.

SHIELD and by extension Fury and Clint were starting to get on Tony’s last nerve. It had been almost three weeks now and when he was forced to think about it he was still majorly miffed about the close the whole episode had come to disaster on so many levels. So the last thing he needed was Fury berating him or Clint’s yammering.

“I want to question him Stark. We need to answers on why the Chitauri targeted us and what capabilities they still might have left.”

Tony heard Bruce sigh.

Okay, so Tony was wrong. Maybe the last thing he needed was Fury being an idiot. “Nick, you know that he doesn’t have that information anymore. Gone. Kaput. Sacado por la fuerza.”

“So he claims,” Clint sneered glaring at Tony, hands tense as they pressed flat into the table rather than curled into the fists like they were a moment ago.

“You know Clint,” Tony said, trying to stay calm despite the irritation and impatience layering in his voice, “You weren’t the only one rocking the Tesseract blue contacts.” Now both Clint and Natasha glowered at him. He returned their stares, upping the wattage on his own. If Clint wanted a get out of jail free card for his actions during that time, he needed to understand that others might have one too. Tony jerked a thumb towards Fury, “Or did Calico Jack here not send you that memo?”

“Oh, I got it Stark.” The archer sneered.

“Good, then shut-it, the adults are talking now.” Tony turned his attention back to Fury. “I discussed this extensively with your best boy when he first visited with me, so I know it made in into one of his reports. The information you are looking for is Ya no más. It’s not hidden or blocked or any of the mind fuckey things we might do. This is Asgardian mind fuckery, apparently they don’t just paint over something, they remove the damn wall. It be gone Nicky. Anything about that time you want to know, you need to discuss with the Space Viking Father of the Year. Maybe he kept it in one of Dumbledore’s memory spheres.” Tony flopped disgustedly as far back into his chair as he could without it tipping over. “Hell if I think of any other way to explain it to you when you refuse to understand.”

Both Fury and his number one girl Natasha had gone very still and very silent, so after a moment he impatiently continued. “Additionally we, meaning me, Bruce and Pepper, are not the one’s under a geas anymore. He is. All Daddy decided that there was too much of a possibility of him coming into contact with someone not under the geas, so he took it off of us and put it on Loki. That little

dissertation Odin carved in his kid's back and sealed with molten metal? Apparently some sort of list of things he will not hear, see or understand. So you can ask him about the attack all you like, he won't understand you. The words and images just won't be processed by his brain. How's that for a mind fucking?"

Natasha looked mildly impressed. Steve looked horrified.

"That's... Wrong." Steve said faintly.

"Is it Steve? Or will it save us all the retaliation from Asgard because some stubborn bastard decided to sit Loki down for an Invasion Marathon Film Fest just to see what happens, even if there isn't the slightest chance that he could ever answer any questions?" Bruce asked quietly, with a small roll of his head towards Fury.

Steve's facial muscles tensed and unease flickered in his eyes.

Bruce had, of course, been present at the meeting where Fury had passed along the pictures of the god's eyes returned to green. Not unexpectedly, Fury was extremely upset. Instead of a known, already imprisoned perpetrator, Earth now had worry about a totally unknown, space armada owning enemy who could subjugate a god. Natasha and Clint had shared Fury's concerns about a bigger baddy out there somewhere, but Clint was still blaming Loki for what happened. Obviously the guy had issues that hadn't been worked through yet. Steve had been upset about the now unknown enemy, but he had also fretted about the fact that they sent a possibly innocent person back to Asgard in chains and a muzzle. The muzzle being something he had vehemently disagreed with from the outset.

"Now. Let us get back to the important bits shall we?" Tony said, holding up his hand to stop Fury's next tirade. "You," Tony pointed to Fury, "Need to keep out of his mess. And believe me it is a mess. Loki is a prisoner, but not for anything that happened here. So you really need to back the fuck off. It was some big time shit, and most of it was related to him having a personal meltdown of 'godly' proportions, but not all of it. Thor knows more than I do but he's not talking. And on that little side note, you all might want to watch what you say to Point Break, he is a lot smarter than we are giving him credit for. I have it on good authority that he has been Punkin' us on an Asgardian timescale."

"All of that may be true Stark, but he is still a knowledge base of information this planet desperately needs."

"The whole planet?" Bruce asked mildly, while pushing his glasses up with one finger. "Or just certain sections of it?"

"Look Banner--"

"Because if it's just certain sections, that means you aren't so much interested in getting the information that will benefit Earth as a whole as you are with gaining information to be kept secret to give SHIELD an advantage over everyone else. No matter how much it might benefit this planet in general."

"Now look Banner--"

"No, you look." Bruce retorted, his face took on a mulish, slightly green tinged look, "I'm not saying he does, because it is pretty farfetched, but what if the Asgardians knew some way to end world hunger? Would you want to suppress that information? I'm willing to bet you would, wouldn't you?"

Fury froze a moment before taking a deep temper settling breath. “Not all of us can afford to be as naive as you are Doctor Banner.” He said in a voice of forced calm. “Do you know what sort of problems information like that could cause. Over population leading to the militarization of third world countries, unrest due to increased unemployment, the stress of large scale environmental compression. The list is endless and exactly the sort of thing we need to be wary of when getting information from an advanced alien race.”

A disgusted frown deepened on Bruce’s face. His inner thoughts toward Intelligence agencies in general and SHIELD in particular plain to read upon his face.

While Tony shared Bruce’s general feelings on the matter he was a bit more of a realist. Rolling his eyes dramatically Tony stood. “Yeah. That’s most likely the same kind of thinking that delayed the renaissance. You security and intelligence people crack me up. Do you think innovation happens in a vacuum?”

“Stark this planet needs intel. We need to know about Asgard and the other realms; we don’t even know for sure who lives in those realms.” Fury told him stepping to towards Tony, blocking him from leaving the room. “And yes we also need to make sure any specie changing information is not broadcast far and wide until the implications of that information are thoroughly understood.”

Tony leaned back insolently, regarding Fury with one of his patented, ‘Oh really?’ expressions before he allowed his signature Stark smirk to curl up the corners of his mouth. “Well then Nick you are in luck. Because I just so happen to know that one of his next books is an illustrated child’s primer of the Nine Realms of Yggdrasil. Jarvis tells me he can draw. Who knew? But just because I’m such a nice guy I’ll be sure to get you a copy as soon as it is published.” Tony said as he pushed past the leather coated director, heading towards the door.

“It will be a little gift from me to you Nicky.”

Chapter End Notes

Also I have a question, which do you prefer? A block of chapters posted several times a week as quickly as possible and then a break to allow the next block to get finished. Or weekly updates that allow the flow to be uninterrupted? Please let me know.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Did you bring pudding?

Chapter Summary

Tony gets a surprise. A nice one for a change.

Chapter Notes

RATINGS CHANGE! - Please check the bottom notes for any specifics since starting now that is where they will be listed to avoid giving away plot points and other fun things. You have been warned.

After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for Loki under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing, his memory going back for the last four years. This decision and events that lead to it cause Frigga to decide that Asgard is not safe for Loki, but Stark Tower is.

Our story so far for those of you just tuning in... Tony and Frigga make the deal, bribes are offered and accepted, Pepper is not happy, neither apparently is Odin. Loki's physical injuries are cured but his mental issues are causing new ones. Tony is meh, Bruce and Pepper get excited about them. Oh and Loki makes a break for freedom and does a little freefall, Tony is very much not amused. Loki takes issue with Tony's accounting practices and starts his own prison work shop. Mom saves money, but Tony can't get any new material. The Loki Exercise channel is a big hit... at least with Tony. Fury comes to visit. He wants to know who is behind publishing company with ties to Stark Industries. Fury is curious about the political, scientific and historical writing. The bridge crew of the HeliCarrier just want to know when the sequel to a certain smut filled bodice ripper will be released. Phil is not amused. After much delay Tony goes to talk to Loki and offers him a teaching position and then gets freaked out by a demonstration of exactly how easily Loki is able to write racy material. Ummm, Natasha dropped in without an invite, Loki has been advised not to be a shit and neither Fury or Pepper are happy with each other right now.

The tower is attacked and Loki decides to ensure his own safety. He may be without his powers, but he isn't totally powerless ya know. Except for the fact that Doom heard Jarvis refer to him as 'Odinson' and sent a doom bot to snag him. With no powers and an already broken foot Loki was starting to get a little worried. Then something stuck the doom bot causing his ankle to be crushed right as he was torn out of it grip to fall to his certain death. Except he didn't Tony plowed into the bot rescuing but further injuring the god. Despite attempts by Fury to have him sent to a SHIELD facility Loki ended up in Brooklyn, Odin and Thor eventual showed up, Loki was healed without him ever seeing the pair and Tony took him back to the tower to recover in the penthouse. The merits of various puddings are discussed and Tony and Bruce have to get pretty pissy when Fury starts looking for answers from the somnolent god.

Chapter 37 – Did you bring pudding?

“Sir, I am sorry to interrupt you, but Agent Coulson is here.”

Tony was sitting on low mechanic’s stool surrounded by mini reactor parts. The prototype he was currently assembling was his third attempt to find a cost effective way to make a mini-reactor available for purchase by an individual household. He had the size down to about twice the bulk of an outside residential Air Conditioning unit, but his challenge of course was to make it reliable, cost effective at this size and not something that could be easily bastardized by companies into low-cost, shoddy copies. Not so much because he objected to the damn thing being cheaper, but more because it was too dangerous to be made with substandard material or manufactured with cost-cutting procedures. If it were possible to make it cheaper in a safe manner, he would be doing it that way. Since he wasn’t in this for the fast buck, Tony wasn’t about to release something that was unsafe and he didn’t want anyone spinning off substandard knock-offs of his design.

“Sir, what do you want me to tell Agent Coulson?” A slightly impatient Jarvis asked after several more minutes.

Tony looked up frowning. “What? Hasn’t he left yet?” Since he had been half hoping that if he ignored Coulson he would go away. He hadn’t actually thought it would work, since Coulson was as tenacious as gum on hot pavement... but he had hoped. Besides he liked fucking with him.

“No sir.”

Tony’s head dropped a moment before he climbed laboriously to his feet. “Crap. Let me get upstairs first and then let him up Jarvis.” Even though it pained him to say it he did, “All the way to the penthouse please.”

OoooO

“Hello Stark. Nice of you to make time to see me.” Coulson said as he exited the elevator and stepped into the entry hall. As usual, not a hair was out of place, his black suit and shoes were immaculate and the agent’s outward demeanor was calm and friendly as if he would never even think of threatening to taser someone until they drooled.

Tony wasn’t fooled.

“You know the only reason I agreed to let you in was that I was at a stopping point. You want to see me in the future, you schedule an appointment. Official consulting hours are between eight and five every other Thursday. You do not just drop in whenever you feel like it.”

“Sure I do Stark.” Coulson said blandly, daring Tony to argue with him.

“Yeah. Okay you do, but that doesn’t mean I have to like it.”

“Frankly Stark, I could care less either way. I came to visit your contract.”

“Well since it isn’t dinner time, unless you brought a pudding cup of the correct flavor with you, the odds of getting him to even open his eyes are pretty remote.” Tony said with a shrug, leaning against the closed double doors leading out of the penthouse’s elevator lobby to. “So you might as well just toddle back home to Poppa Furry.”

Coulson raised an eyebrow, “You told us a month to six weeks. It’s been almost ten.”

“No. All Daddy Odin told me was four to six weeks. Apparently in addition to be a dick father he is also not all knowing.” Tony told him with a shrug.

“I want to talk to him.”

Tired of stalling and knowing Coulson was not going to go away quietly, Tony gave up. “Fine. You want to try, knock yourself out.” Straightening up he opened the doors and led Coulson into the livingroom.

In the weeks that Loki had been recovering, Tony had gotten the care and feeding of a convalescing ex-god down to an art. Their morning routine was down to about forty-five minutes, over half of which was spent at breakfast. It had been years since Tony had eaten or slept this regularly. He felt better than he had in years.

Pepper was ecstatic.

After breakfast Tony left the god parked in the living room with Jarvis watching him until dinner time. After dinner, Tony either watched a movie while noodling on his tablet or slipped back down to the lab for a few hours while Jarvis worked through a list of movies Tony had already seen, but which he thought might interest Loki to at least listen to. Jarvis said Loki often wasn't asleep; he just seldom moved or opened his eyes. In fact it took Minion bumping the god repeatedly to get him to take a water bottle when Jarvis followed up on Bruce's hydration schedule.

“Yo, Loki. You have company. Agent Coulson is here to see you.” Tony walked over towards where the god was laying on the couch. “Code; back the fuck up.” Tony told Minion, who had been standing front and center by the large dark grey couch.

“Very cute Stark.” Coulson said, standing there holding his hands in front of him as he watched Tony shooing away the robot and physically manhandling the god into a sitting position in the middle of the couch.

“He is, isn't he?” Tony said brushing loose hairs back away from the god's face before plopping down beside him. He had gotten used to this. Loki was like a tall Asgardian ragdoll; he just kind of stayed wherever Tony moved him to. If Jarvis told him Loki had been lying down all day, Tony just propped him up and left him sitting up after dinner. If he had been sitting up all day, Tony let him drape himself across most of the couch after dinner.

When he wanted to, Loki did move around well enough. He could get from the motorized chair to the couch, the hall bathroom and to the kitchen. So Tony no longer worried about him moving around by himself. The only thing they had to do was keep the bedroom doors locked or Loki would head back to bed the minute Tony left the penthouse. And if his door was locked to encourage him to stay up, he wasn't choosy about whose bed either. Which was why Tony's room and the other guest rooms were now also kept locked during the day.

“I meant the robot,” retorted Coulson dryly.

“Seriously?” Tony smirked and shook his head, “Well there is no accounting for taste, but hey, to each his own. Yo. Minion. Water for the god!” He commanded snaking an arm behind Loki's back and tugging on his braid. Not getting a response he pulled on the braid until Loki's chin no longer rested on his chest and then poked the dark hair man hard in the ribs. “Eyes open. Now please.”

Letting his head fall back on the couch and loll over towards Tony, Loki partially opened his eyes. “Is it dinner time?” he asked in a low voice.

“No, Agent Coulson here wants to talk to you.”

Loki rolled his hooded eyes over towards Coulson for a moment, “If it’s not dinner, I don’t have to wake up,” he said letting his eyes sink shut.

“Loki, I’d like to talk to you if you don’t mind.”

And Loki didn’t mind. But he didn’t answer or respond either. Coulson talked, Tony poked ribs and tugged hair. However with the exception of opening his eyes long enough to take and drain the water bottle Minion brought him when Tony insisted, he didn’t even look at Coulson again for the rest of his visit.

As much fun as it was watching Coulson talk and cajole without receiving any response of any kind, it did get a little boring. So Tony amused himself by playing with the end of Loki’s long braid.

“Stark.”

Tony looked up. At Coulson’s head toss he patted Loki on the knee. “Back in a bit Sleeping Beauty, try not to get in trouble while I’m gone.”

“What’s going on here?” Coulson asked quietly once then were in the kitchen.

“Your guess is as good as mine. But both Bruce and my private physician say he’s physically healed. Who knows what’s going on with his energy levels? Although I will say he’s much easier to get up in the morning. Oh, and Jarvis tells me he isn’t sleeping all day like he was the first month and a half. He’s just... Away. He doesn’t open his eyes or respond except in the morning or at dinner.”

And Tony had tried to get him to respond many times. Especially in these last two weeks after Jarvis confirmed that the god wasn’t sleeping. It had become a bit of a game to see what it would take to get a reaction out of Loki. Tony had told him outrageous stories and played the stupidest movies he could think of while making the most ridiculous comments. He had propped Loki up in the corner of the couch and used him as a body pillow. He had even put Loki’s head on his lap, unraveled his braid and spent a whole movie running his finger through the god’s hair. The last one in fact was the only one so far to get a response. Not verbal or anything, but he did notice a small frown when he stopped to change the channel or get a drink.

“So is this a normal recovery? Depression? Or a scam of some sort?”

“How the hell should I know? I’ve never been cured of multiple internal injuries and breaks within the space of an hour. I hear it takes a lot out of you. He isn’t exactly at his godly strength anymore. Maybe his Odin-ness miscalculated the amount of time it would take his mortal energy levels to recover. He sure as shit isn’t all knowing or his kid never would have ended up tap dancing through New York during rush hour in the company of giant space whales.”

“Humm.”

Coulson’s lips tightened. He gifted Tony with that special *‘I really want to pop a cap in your ass, but it would cause far more trouble than you are worth’* look that Coulson seemed to reserve solely for dealing with the him.

“Tony, we have been waiting patiently for answers, and as of this morning we don’t even have the ‘Child’s Guide to Asgard’ book we were promised. You need to find a way to fix this. Fury is not going to be patient forever.”

Tony smacked a few buttons on his refrigerator sized automatic coffee dispenser. “Look, I am doing everything I can.”

“Obviously not, if this is the result.” Coulson looked at his watch. “You have a week from right now to figure this out or we will have to call in some SHIELD experts.”

“Yeah fine.” Not that Tony was going to allow anything like that to happen, but if a little insincere agreeing helped him get rid of Coulson faster, the billionaire was up for it. “Look, I’ll think of something.” What Tony had no idea, but hey, it sounded good and... it did finally get Coulson’s ass out of his apartment.

OoooO

Tony had come out of the shower wearing a pair of cotton fleece Iron Man PJ bottoms and drying his hair with a towel to find his bed occupied. Instead of being in his own bed, a long limbed Loki, wearing only soft grey light weight knit pants, was sitting cross-legged in the middle Tony’s large bed. And looking oh so fine... Not that Tony was noticing or anything. If pressed Tony would admit to being surprised as hell at the god’s presence in his bed maybe, but not in a bad way.

“So, is there a problem with your own bed that requires you to visit mine?” Tony asked curiously, tossing the towel back into the bathroom and walking over to stand by the edge of the bed.

The dark hair god shrugged, “You told me after that man left that I had to start being more active.” Loki looked away, as a blush spread faintly across his chest and delicately tinted his cheeks. Loki’s gorgeous eyes flicked hesitantly back towards Tony. “Besides, my hair needed to be re-braided before I go to bed,” he said with a wistful little smile running a hand through his half unraveled dark hair. Loki slid sinuously over to the edge of his bed and handed Tony a hairbrush, lifting it like it was an offering.

“Please Tony? I can never get it as neat as you do.”

Hoping that he wasn’t totally misreading this and that it was what he hoped it was, Tony’s lips curled into a delighted smile. He held out a hand for the brush. “Sure, come sit over here and I’ll braid it for you.” Over by the window, Tony pulled a low footstool over and gestured for Loki to sit down while he sat behind him on the sofa. Placing the brush and hair ties beside him, Tony ran his hands through Loki’s hair a few times. Then, placing his arms loosely over Loki’s shoulders, he leaned far enough forward that he could look at the god’s profile. “You have a couple of snarls going on here, I think I need to brush it a bit before we get to the braiding part. Sound okay to you?”

He had counted it as a good start that Loki hadn’t sat as stiffly as he usually did when Tony fixed his hair. The fact that when Tony leaned forward Loki had just turned his head towards him with a small smile without flinching was a welcome plus. However, when Tony sat back to start actually brushing the silky black hair, the god actually leaned against him, resting fully between Tony’s legs. Head tilted down on his chest, Loki laid his arms on Tony’s thighs, allowing his hands to rest on the insides of Tony’s pajama-clad knees.

All-righty then.

As he ran the brush through Loki’s hair, the god made a few little noises of contentment, going so far as to wordlessly voice complaint when Tony pushed him forward a bit to get a better angle to brush at. He might not have been sitting flush up against Tony anymore, but Loki was still being held close enough by Tony’s legs that he could feel the heat from Loki’s bare skin and the occasional shiver running through the god’s body when the back of Tony’s hand brushed the nape

of his neck. Deciding the slightly curly cloud of hair was as smooth as it was going to get, Tony put down the brush a moment. Running his fingers from Loki's temples down past his shoulders he felt the black strands of silky hair slide away from his palms as he reached its end.

"I still think you and your hair are well matched," Tony said, gathering up the sections he was going to braid. "You're both beautiful and psychotic."

"Is that a problem, Tony?" Loki purred, keeping his head bent forward to give Tony a better angle to braid from.

If Tony thought the god's low purr was distracting, it was nothing compared to the tightening sensation in his groin caused by Loki's thumbs as they idly rubbed circles on the insides of Tony's thighs. Working quickly, before any hardening parts of his anatomy could embarrass him; Tony platted the silky hair into a tight braid and twisted a tie around the end to hold it in place. If he thought being done brushing Loki's hair was going to make anything easier on him, Tony thought wrong. Loki leaned back against him with a contented sigh, turning his head slightly to brush his cheek against Tony's bare chest, the top of his head just underneath Tony's chin. Tony felt himself flushing. Being this close there was no way in the world that Loki could be miss how aroused Tony was becoming. He just couldn't help putting his hand on the god's shoulders and stoking his thumbs through the little wisps of hair that were too short to be tamed by the braid he had just finished. "No. It's no problem. No problem at all," he said more to himself than man he was caressing.

Snuggling deeper, Loki reached up and wrapped his fingers around Tony's, gently tugging them until Tony's arms were slung over on his shoulders. With light delicate movements he stroked his hands up and down Tony's arms. Smoothing, ruffling, then smoothing the fine hairs on Tony's arms, sometimes stroking all the way to Tony's finger tips. The god's long fingers traced almost hypnotically down Tony's palm to the very ends of his fingers, rubbing small circles on the pads of the engineer's fingers before stoking back up his arm again. For the longest time, Tony was afraid to move. Afraid that if he did, Loki would stop. But also afraid that he would accidentally make some unwelcome move that would break the mood. Something that Tony really, really didn't want to do.

The first time he had found himself fantasizing about the god, he had been more than a little weirded out. After all he was still engaged to Pepper at the time. But he couldn't resist watching the recording of Loki exercising and wondering what it would feel like to have that long limber body underneath him. It wasn't that he necessarily liked guys or anything, Tony just couldn't resist pretty. Not in any form. And for a guy, Loki was more than pretty. He was six kinds of stunning on top of legs that went on forever.

Yeah, Tony had a kink for tall people. That is why he had loved when Pepper had worn her highest heels, raising her several inches above him. In fact, all the men Tony had ever been with, in addition to being too well known to risk being ever being indiscreet... They were all over six foot tall. There was nothing in the world hotter than having someone that towered over you come apart under your hands. Just the thought of having the person who had only minutes ago loomed over him being total owned... Well, it made Tony's cock twitch just thinking about it.

Despite his fear of spooking the god, Tony couldn't help folding his arms around Loki. When that brought no complaint he gripped him tighter between his legs while pressing a kiss on the top of Loki's head. When several moments had passed, without a mischief-maker trying to wiggle loose, Tony decided to go for broke. First he slid his hand to the side of Loki's face, turning it so he could press a kiss on his temple. Nuzzling his nose in Loki's hairline, he gently pushed on his shoulder, encouraging the god to turn towards Tony.

Taking Tony's cue, Loki slipped off the small foot stool, pushing it out of his way so he could kneel between Tony's legs. "Are you sure Tony?" he asked, searching Tony's face while his hands skimmed over the top of Tony's pajama bottoms. "I must warn you, I can be quite a handful."

"Are you?" Tony asked with a grin. "Bad enough that you have to do a disclosure before you fuck?"

Loki didn't answer him. Instead he ran his fingers along the inside of Tony's waistband, causing a small shiver to run through Tony when the god's fingers met at the front. Tony held his breath as Loki paused, keeping his fingers hooked underneath the material. "Oh yes." He breathed, warming the skin on Tony's chest, before he lifted his face up in an obvious invitation.

"Are you sure?" Tony asked a bit hoarsely, hoping Loki knew he was asking about the kiss and not disclosures.

Loki trailed one of his fingers up over Tony's firm stomach and gently past the scar where his arc reactor used to be until they slid over his goatee. He delicately traced Tony's lower lip. "Of course I'm sure. Didn't I tell you all what I had imagined you doing to me?" Tony's body betrayed him with an unmistakable twitch as his groin tightened in anticipation. From the sly smile that deepened at the corners of Loki's mouth, he damn well knew the god had felt it.

"What am I going to do with you?" he mused, almost to himself, as he bent down to press a kiss on the god kneeling before him. He shivered a bit as Loki's hand traced down his chest before ghosting back to hook his fingers again just inside his waist band.

"Shall I write some suggestions down for you?" Loki said against his lips and Tony could feel the god's silent chuckle shake his body.

Not answering, Tony took advantage of Loki's question to insinuate his tongue into the clever mouth that had been plaguing his fantasies for longer than he cared to think about. He swirled his tongue several time around Loki's, deepened the kiss. After what seemed like an eternity he withdrew, ignoring the little mewl of dissatisfaction, to plant a few soft kisses on the god's lower lip and the edge of his mouth. He moved slightly, avoiding the god's attempt to capture his mouth, and instead trailed soft kisses up his jawline and nipped under Loki's ear. "Nobody likes a smart ass." He whispered before moving up to kiss the god's temple, smiling to himself as small wisps of midnight black hair tickled his nose.

"Oh yes they do." Loki said rising up, his clever fingers stroking their way up Tony's chest, tweaking the skin around his nipples several times causing Tony's breath to catch as he flicked the hardening nubs with his thumbs. His hands slipping up and capturing both sides of Tony's face, holding it still so he could reclaim the billionaire's mouth. This time, with an impatient little murmur, it was Loki who pressed for entry.

Teasingly, Tony leaned back, thrilling at the lithe movements made as a six foot three god flowed up from the floor to straddle Tony's lap. One of Loki's hands twisted into his hair at the nape of his neck while the other skimmed over his jawline, his thumb stroking Tony's lower lip gently trying to tug it open. "Something I can help you with there, Bambi?" he teased.

Loki froze. For the briefest moment, Tony thought he had pissed the god off. But then with a devilish gleam in those dark green eyes, Loki gave up on trapping Tony's mouth and instead settled back onto Tony's lap with a naughty little wiggle.

Tony groaned. The thin material of their pants might as well have not been there. He could feel body heat and hard excitement as Loki opened up his stance, pressing down on him with slow,

wanton rolls of his hips.

Tony felt like he'd died and had gone to heaven. Granted Tony's preferred version of heaven was usually populated with Victoria Secret models wearing high heels and push up bras... Oh and corsets... Tony knew his corsets, Lord knows he'd bought enough of them over the years. Just a flashing thought of what Loki would look like strutting through his penthouse in jeweled high heels and a green leather corset made Tony's mind shut down for a moment since he knew the guy currently grinding on his lap had the *'Bitch Please'* swagger to them justice.

A particularly deep roll brought Tony back to the moment, rutting up and biting his lower lip to keep from moaning at how good a lap full of barely dressed Nordic god looked and felt even without a corset and heels. Just as Tony was starting to sync himself to the movement, Loki lifted high on his knees with a wicked chuckle.

"Nooooooo." Tony moaned, trying unsuccessfully to pull the god back down on this lap.

"No?" Loki asked with a mocking, full on pout. "Is there something I can help you with, Anthony?" he cooed lowering his forehead and resting it against Tony's, his long, elegant fingers stroking the outline of his goatee before reaching up to tap on Tony's lower lip.

"You are so bad." Tony growled before giving in to the god's demand.

"Uh huh." Loki agreed, running his tongue lightly against the edge of Tony's teeth before taking complete possession of his mouth. Not that Tony cared, since the deeper he kissed Tony, the lower he settled on his lap. And it wasn't like Tony didn't give the god a little encouragement to press down on him by running his hands all the way down on either side of Loki's back. Tony pushed Loki soft pants down as far as he could to gain unobstructed access to the god's incredibly toned ass. "Oh yeah," he gasped, "this is what I want."

Loki released his lips with one last tug on the lower one. "Really, Tony?" His hands withdrew from around Tony's neck, trailing down each of Tony's arms until he drew them back and raised them slowly over his head, reaching up like a cat having a long slow stretch. "Are you quite sure I can't interest you in something else?"

Okay, this could be nice too, Tony thought while taking in long lines of sculpted muscle. Loki looked like something that belonged in a fine art museum. Beautiful proportions and perfect alabaster skin that just begged to be marked. Without moving his hands, Tony leaned forward to nuzzle the god's neck. But as much as he leaned forward Loki laughed and leaned back, skimming his hands down his body until they were splayed across his own inner thighs.

While it wasn't like Tony had forgotten how limber the god was... He just never really expected him to be draped back over Tony's knees leaving only his stomach anywhere within reach of Tony's mouth. If Tony was anywhere near as loose limbed as Loki was, which he was not.

Still... Loki arched his back in a long stretch, his knees gripping Tony and somehow keeping himself from falling. Tony couldn't help but move his hands from underneath the god to trail them appreciatively down Loki's chest, abs and especially that perfectly taunt belly which quivered every time the god laughed.

"You think this is funny?" Tony asked, reaching up to give both nipples a few firm pinches before sliding his hands down to pull at Loki's pants, releasing the god's hard cock which was already dripping pre-cum. Loki gasped and sat up quickly when Tony wrapped his right hand firmly around the god's erection. Tony stroked his thumb lightly across the leaking slit. He then rubbed his now slippery thumb firmly on the underside of the head. Guiding Loki's hand to his own rock

hard erection, Tony gave his wrist a quick twist and a fast pump that made Loki moan.

Pulling Tony closer, Loki lowered his mouth over Tony's and owned it.

Everything about Loki looked and felt so good that Tony was losing his mind. He groaned into the god's mouth when Loki started stroking Tony's cock as he kept time with each stroke by rocking his hips beneath Tony's hand.

Despite all the times Tony had imagined this, he honestly hadn't thought it would ever happen. But it was. So while he didn't think either of them was going to last long this first time, Tony was very much looking forward to spreading Loki out on his bed and leisurely exploring every inch of him. And before he had Loki screaming for release later on tonight, he was going to stake a claim and mark his god somewhere very visible.

Panting, Tony pulled away from the kiss, burying his face against Loki's neck, he knew Loki could feel his lips curl up in a huge grin as he started incorporating a very well received twisting motion every few stokes.

Tony was also, he promised himself, going to mark his god somewhere very private. Somewhere that only Loki and he would be able to see. He fastened his teeth at the base of Loki's jaw, tempted to start the public mark right now, but after only a quick nip he changed his mind. He wanted to have access to all of his god before he decided where his mark would be made... And besides, from the small hitches in Loki's breathing when Tony extended his stroke to include the more sensitive head, he knew his god was very, very close...

"Sir, I'm sorry to interrupt, but I believe you have a visitor."

Chapter End Notes

This is a FrostIron fic and there will be smut. I've marked it mature, but it might be considered explicit depending on how you view this sort of thing. If this is not your cup of tea please don't read. You have been warned.

Sadly, I am not as good at this sort of writing as Loki is. Sorry. What can I say, the boy has talent.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful ReindeerGames19. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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House Call

Chapter Summary

Tony's interrupter is revealed. And though he brought it on himself, he is way not happy.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is a short one, it is just how the chapters fell out. Much fun starts next chapter and it is 6k long. :D *giggle*

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 38 - House Call

“Sir, you need to wake up. I believe the Asgardians have sent a doctor for Mister Odinson.”

“What?” Confused, Tony lifted his head from his pillow. Grimacing at the weak light coming in through his window shade his brows knit in confusion for a moment before he slammed a fist into his pillow.

“No! It was a fucking dream!” Rigid with anger and bitter disappointment Tony flopped down and buried his face into the pillow he had just assaulted.

No. No. No. No. NO!

“Jarvis, what fucking time is it? And why the hell did you wake me?!”

“It is six fourteen in the morning sir; the current temperature is forty-seven degrees. As you know I normally don’t disturb you when you seem to be enjoying your dreams, but I think you need to hurry,” Jarvis warned him. “The doctor is waiting at the terrace door and she does not appear to be in a very pleasant mood.”

Argh!

“Look let her in, apologize for the delay... Didn’t know she was coming... Crap like that. Explain to her that you just woke me and I’ll be right out.” Tony instructed the AI, hoping he could get rid of his dream induced morning wood in time to make nice with the Doctor from Outer Space.

Okay, so maybe he had detoured last night before going to bed and called three times for Beetlejuice, but it was almost still night time as far as Tony was concerned. And besides... He had been interrupted in the middle of a really, really good dream. The billionaire knew without a doubt that his whole day was going to be crap.

Tony hurriedly decided on casual dress-y dark indigo jeans with a crispy white dress shirt hastily

tucked into them, socks, black sneakers and a black leather belt he was buckling even as he walked into his living room.

“Sorry,” Tony called out as he patted his belt into place and ran a hasty hand through his hair. Not that it would help much. “It’s still a little early here and I didn’t know you would be here so soon.”

Lady Eir, which is what Tony decided to address her as, just gave him a slightly exasperated look, but he decided not to take it personally, since she seemed to be one of those doctors without a lot of patience for social niceties.

“I have been told, very briefly what has occurred. But if you don’t mind,” Said Eir in a way that unmistakably confirmed to him that he had better *not* mind, “I would like you to give me a summary on Prince Loki’s heath since he woke up from the healing coma.”

“Yeah. About that...”

In the end Tony introduced Lady Eir to Jarvis and had Jarvis give her a run down on all things medically related up until the accident. Fortunately for Tony, Jarvis just did a summary of what was done, without dwelling on any background dates unless Eir asked for them specifically. But even here Tony lucked out, since she seemed to be more inclined to attribute any delays in treatment on Loki’s stubborn refusal to ask for help. Apparently he had a bit of a history of hiding his illnesses... And it didn’t hurt that she really didn’t understand exactly how twenty-four seven Tony’s surveillance was. It didn’t make Tony feel like any less of a shit, but it most likely saved him a lot of dirty looks from the formidable old lady.

Tony gave her a fairly complete run down of the injuries he had sustained two months ago and a description of what Odin had done. Then he and Jarvis answered various questions about what had been occurring during his recovery down to a daily tally of food intake and water consumption.

Jarvis was pretty scary sometime. Tony wondered if Pepper got a report on Tony like this every month. He thought about asking, but if she was, she had most likely had instructed Jarvis to lie about it. So there really was no point in perusing it.

“What?” Tony asked, having zoned out on his own thoughts.

“Where is Prince Loki now?”

“Jarvis, what is Mister Mistoffelees doing?”

“His actigraphy algorithm along with other observations indicate that he is still sleeping, sir.” Jarvis replied, no doubt showing off for the doctor.

“Yeah. ‘Kay. You want me to go wake him up for you? Or do you want to do it?” Tony asked trying to mask a yawn of his own behind one hand since it was still pretty early for him.

“No. It will be easier if he is sleeping to get him to stay calm enough to evaluate.” Eir replied, picking up her satchel and indicating for Tony to lead her to the Prince with a wave of her hand.

“So... Should he still be this tired?”

“I think that the All Father did not adequately take into account the drain on a mortal body for the amount of healing he did. Not to mention the shock to his system of having a major geas cast immediately thereafter. However, I am still inclined to think he should be showing more improvement than you or your servant describe. Perhaps not perfect, but certainly not needing to remain immobile all day.”

Oh.

When they got to the guest room Loki was currently installed in, Tony quietly opened the door and then followed her in.

While no lights were on, Loki's room was pretty well lit with the morning sun flooding into the room. Eir took a few short rods out of her bag, placing six of them around her patient before thumbing some kind of controller.

Whoa! She could do the wavy diagnostic projection thingy too. When Odin had done this trick, albeit without the little rods or controller, there were a boat-load of pulsing red areas, a lot of yellow areas and a couple of swirling black hole looking spots that had made Odin frown when he turned his attention towards them. But...even to Tony's untrained eye there didn't seem to be any problems at all, the entire thing was a beautiful clear blue...Except for two swirling black spots, a 'Y' shaped one the projection of Loki's frontal lobes and an arc right below the center.

"Oh, God no--"

Eir turned and shot him such an evil look that Tony almost put his hands over his mouth to stop anymore involuntary remarks. Tony wasn't a praying man, not really. But a childhood filled with accompanying either his nanny de jour or their old housekeeper to church had more or less indoctrinated him to prayer as a spontaneous last chance reflex when confronted by something even he couldn't fix.

Please, please, please God, don't let her say he's been brain damaged somehow.

It was several more minutes of Eir studying the projection and occasionally changing it to a different view somehow before Tony's shifting from side to side like a toddler trying to control his bladder caught her attention. Frowning at his antics she turned back, placing something that looked like half of a billiard ball against his bare skin, tapping it and then checking her projections one more time before gathering up her rods and gesturing for Tony to step into the hall way with her.

As soon as she had closed the door behind them, she turned to Tony with a raised brow.

"Problem?"

"Ah...That wasn't brain damage we were seeing was it?" Tony wasn't really sure what he was going to do if it was. Well, other than update his will, throw a really big party and try to talk Pepper into having one last session of marathon pity sex with him.

Surprisingly, a lovely smile broke out on the old woman's face. "Nothing nearly that serious Anthony Stark. The prince..." She paused a moment, appearing to look inwardly for the best way to explain it to a non-medical mortal before continuing in a soothing tone, "Has long been subject to a tendency towards depression."

Well that sucks.

Tony can't even imagine how anyone can deal with depression without a bar full of liquor, which Loki definitely had not had access to these last few years. "Umm, does this have anything to do with him being adopted?" Which, judging by her narrowed eyes was clearly not something scary old doctor broad wanted to be asked.

"No, he has no memory of that fact, so it plays no part here." Eir replied, her voice just short of abrupt.

Okay...

“I know, I mean because he’s... Well Bruce mentioned something about him being different than most Asgardians, he’s Yotim?”

“Ah.” Eir seemed to simmer down, but then she shook her head. “No. The Æsir and Jotun are more alike than many will admit these days. I would say it has more to do with his mastery of Seiðr and perhaps somewhat his own natural mental makeup. Many of those with a mastery of Seiðr are prone to such problems. It seems that the more skilled the practitioner, the higher the chances of personal volatility.”

That really sucked.

“So, magic makes you crazy?” Tony asked, just wanting to be sure he understood her correctly.

Placing a thin, almost translucently skinned hand to her mouth, Eir regarded him with an amused expression. “Not at all, though historically it has been postulated that the incredible stresses placed on the more advanced Seiðr Masters are really the cause, or at least the catalyst.” She said thoughtfully. “After all having to deal with stressful situations seems to be the one of the perils of those using the gift.”

“Wait a minute,” Tony disagreed. “Lots of professions deal with stress, yours for one.”

“True,” she agreed, “but on a less cosmic scale perhaps and without the strain of having to channel vast amounts of energy through our bodies for a major working.” Stooping down, she rummaged in her satchel for a moment before coming up with a small bottle of dark purple liquid. “For instance, I can be the Æsir chief healer even though my seiðr is a very minor gift. After all I can often turn to technology or chemistry for my solutions.”

Eir handed Tony the bottle and went off into some riff on chemical imbalances caused by low energy levels feeding a depressive state. Bruce was definitely going to have to listen to this later because only half of it made sense to Tony. She also claimed that his lack of access to natural light and the more or less solitary nature of his confinement as a sole prisoner might have laid a base for a negative behavior loop that was prolonging his post-accident recovery time.

“Okay, just so we’re straight, he has to take a measure of this every morning when he gets up.” He held up the bottle and the small metal tumbler she had given him to measure with. The purple liquid apparently was a combination of a five hour energy drink, short term antidepressants and a just a smidge of something to balance his now mortal body chemistry, which the depression and complete depletion of his energy levels had screwed up. “He needs at least a two hours of interaction of some sort and at least two hours of natural light on a daily basis.”

“Yes, this is possible?” she queried.

“Yeah, sure. I mean I see him a couple of hours a day now, I’m sure I can work something out once he moves back to his floor.” While he was being all nonchalant, inside Tony was ecstatic! Royal Asgard medical requirements would go a long way to shutting up Fury once he got wind of Loki teaching classes for SI employees. “And he can sunbathe on one of the terraces or the roof deck no problem. They’re all in secured areas.”

Eir studied him for a long moment. “No. Ground level or completely enclosed.”

Ground level or completely enclosed? What the hell? Did she think he was going to climb down over ninety stories? None of the windows on his building opened from the outside. There was no possibility and gaining entry to a less secure part of the building.

Ground level or completely enclosed?

Oh?

Oh!

“Ah, this wouldn’t have anything to do with that Rainbow Bridge incident that started this whole mess where he... Ah... Fell. Would it?”

Giving him a stern look and totally ignoring his question, Eir pointed to the medicine she had given him. “I will have more sent. He is to be on it for forty days. If there is not marked improvement by the end of that time, tell Heimdall and I will visit again. The first week or two he might exhibit mood swings these should gradually even out, again if they don’t by the end of forty days tell Heimdall.”

“Right. Okay. Now can we revisit the correlation between the whole fall from the bridge and him not being outside above ground level?” Tony was keeping an ex-god in a high building; if the god had a fear of heights Tony hadn’t noticed it. The guy was a freaking free fall pro, so Tony was guessing the problem was not fear of heights. And he was betting it wasn’t an escape thing. Leaving a ‘thing’ Tony didn’t like thinking about. Granted he himself had felt the lure and even been accused of being attracted to and attempting this ‘thing’ but drinking too much was a more passive method, he didn’t really want to contemplate how a restriction against allowing the god access to unsecured heights might be connected to this ‘thing’.

OoooO

Several hours after Eir had left, Bruce arrived. Tony had called and asked him to come check out the recording of Eir’s visit to make sure Tony hadn’t misunderstood the diagnosis and to get his thoughts on her care instructions. Also, Bruce was dying to get a sample of the tonic she had left so he could analyze it.

“Sir, Doctor Banner has arrived.” Jarvis said.

Jumping up, Tony almost ran to the elevator.

“Thank god you’re here, Bruce. I really need a second opinion.” Tony all but pushed Bruce into the large living area.

Bruce stopped for a moment, gazing at the scene in front of him before turning to Tony. “Well this is different.”

Chapter End Notes

Okay. so how many of you got the 'Tony' rather than 'Stark' clue in the last chapter that suspiciously active Loki was using?

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful ReindeerGames19. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Fun and Games

Chapter Summary

Worried Tony, Awake Loki, Sad Bruce, Pissed off Pepper, Fluff and Alcohol. Maybe not all together, but all in this chapter!

Chapter Notes

Oh, I just couldn't help my self on this one. I do what I want and I am not sorry in the least.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 39 - Fun and Games

“How is it that almost every time we see Loki after he’s interacted with another Asgardian he looks younger?”

Tony’s brows rose, shocked and surprised he turned a vaguely horrified face towards Bruce.

Laughing at the weirded-out look on Tony’s face Bruce asked, “What? Just look at him. He looks like he should be going to frat parties.”

“You’re... You’re not wrong,” The billionaire admitted hesitantly. After all, the first time he had seen Loki in the videos where he snatched the Tesseract the god had appeared to be in his mid-thirties, and about the same age, if much spiffier, during the whole kneel thing in Germany. But a short time later when Tony had retrieved him from Thor, the smirking smug git that strutted off of the QuinJet and on to the helicarrier had looked like he was in his early thirties. The Loki that the Viking Queen of Outer Space had dumped on his door step had looked mid to late twenty-ish. Admittedly Tony hadn’t noticed much of a change after Odin and Thor’s visit, because almost everyone looked younger when they were sleeping. But now?

The penthouse living room in Stark Tower was huge. Enormous even. Then factor in the open concept gathering space by the bar, huge open kitchen and even a reception area big enough to double as a dining room that could seat twenty. Pepper had designed it to flow together as one space that could easily accommodate fifty or sixty people. Right now? Right now it was big enough to accommodate a motorized wheel chair being driven by a grinning, punch ball chasing Space Viking. Apparently a game of keep away was in progress between Loki and Minion. Both were armed with small kitchen brooms that they skillfully used to snag the ball when it rolled under something or in an area too small for their wheel bases.

“Tony?” Bruce’s voice recalled him from the horror of the scene before them.

“Scary Old Doctor Broad said she’d come back if he isn’t right in his head by the end of forty days.”

“Tony, this is Loki we’re talking about. I’m not sure he’s ever been right in his head.” Tony closed his eyes and shuddered dramatically. “So, you’re afraid he won’t be better by then?”

“Fuck yeah! Every time he gets relief from whatever crap is inside his head he starts to look and act younger. Hell, if she decides he needs something stronger, I’ll have a fucking teenager on my hands!”

“Oh.”

They both turned and watched the battle for the ball. “Have they damaged much?” Bruce asked curiously, walking over to the bar and dragging two of the stools behind it so they would not be on the playing field side. He sat down, motioned Tony over and patted the other stool.

Reaching into the small bar fridge, Tony pulled two out bottles of Dark Lord Stout and set one in front of Bruce before slumping down beside him. “Amazingly enough... No. Of course Minion has an advance guidance system I’m testing out before I upgrade the boys.” He took a long swallow of his drink, licking a few stray drops of it off his lips before continuing. “And the kid from Asgard is remarkably adept at steering that damn chair. At top speeds, while holding a broom no less.”

Bruce took a sniff and then looked at the wax seal he had just removed from his beer bottle. “I’m not going to be able to get his locally if I decide I like it, am I?” He asked with a wistful expression.

“Nope.”

Minion nimbly swung around a side chair, batting the balloon towards the terrace doors. Keeping the balloon at ground level to minimize damage as Tony had requested earlier.

Rolling the beer around in his mouth a moment like it was a fine wine, the scientist looked regretfully at the bottle as he swallowed. “Chocolate and cherry notes.” Bruce noted sadly. “And chewy too.” He said before returning his attention to the two combatants jockeying to be the first on to get to the ramp that lead up to the reception area.

“Yep.” Tony said, not taking his eyes off the antics in his living room.

“Where’d they get the punch ball?” Bruce asked as Tony planted his elbows on the bar and propped his head in his hands as if it was too heavy not to be supported.

“Dummy lent it to them.”

Raising an eyebrow, Bruce look over at Tony, “Your robot has toys?”

“Well, yeah. How else are they going to improve their manipulation skills. He was going to lend them his soccer ball, but I thought this might be a little less destructive. Besides, he has a bunch of these so if something happens to it he won’t be too upset. The soccer ball is one of his prized possessions.”

“What?!” Tony said noticing Bruce’s semi-incredulous expression.

“Nothing.”

Minion and Loki made a high speed run towards the terrace doors and with a shout of triumph the god managed to swat the ball away from the robot.

So...” Bruce cocked his head towards the terrace area. “How long has he been like this?”

“Lok—Lorin! What in the hell are have you two been doing?” Pepper shrieked.

Loki didn’t exactly screech to a halt, the motorized chair Stark had modified was fast, but not that fast. However he did stop fast enough to bounce forwards a bit.

A very upset Ms. Potts and three security guards were blocking his way back to the elevator and if he had to waste time explaining everything to her, Stark would surely catch up to him. Besides they were attracting a bit of a crowd and while he loved an audience as much as the next person, the more people there were in the hall, the slower he had to go. Still he did have to get around her....

Loki licked his lips nervously as he looked at the large guards looming over him and then sagged back in his chair, hanging his head a bit.

“I’ll tell you, but we need to talk in private for most of it” Loki said looking up at her with an extremely guilty expression. “I’ll explain everything... but,” he glance over at the guards and nearby office workers, “We really do need some heavy duty privacy for much of it.”

It only took a moment for Loki to convince her to accompany him to his ‘guest’ floor rather than back to her office. Because Loki wasn’t called Silver Tongue for nothing after all. So trailed by the three guards she had called to deal the ruckus he and Stark had created they headed towards his floor. Ms. Potts had waved the guards back several feet so she could scold him without being overheard as they headed towards the elevator. As soon as they were across from the doors Loki stopped and mentioned that Stark had been talking to him about giving the roof deck a ‘special’ paint job.

“Really?” Pepper asked in a low voice so as not to be overheard and waved the guards back a few more yards. Loki was right in the middle of telling her about what it might take to protect the building permanently from the top of the roof top stairwell to the lowest parking floor when the elevator binged and Stark came shooting out of it in a chair that was a twin to the one Loki was in. Pepper immediately started screaming at Stark. Taking advantage of the distraction, Loki shot forward, slipping into the elevator just before the door closed, smacking the button for the fifty-first floor on his way past.

Since the rules forbade Jarvis from interfering or telling anyone where they were and what they were doing, Loki was able to make his way to the next floor on the challenge list. Exiting the elevator he leisurely made his way to the South Fire Escape, smacked the door with his hand and went back to the elevator nodding to a few people as he passed. He took his time so as not to draw any more complaints. After all there was no longer any need for speed. Ms. Potts was most likely too busy screaming at Stark to send any guards after him. So unless he drew attention to himself... Which Loki wasn’t going to do, or Stark told her where Loki was headed next... Which would forfeit the game, Loki had nothing to worry about. Ms. Potts had no way of knowing which floors to send the guards to. That was, if she still cared about what Loki was doing now that she had Stark to scream at.

It took him perhaps another ten minutes to complete the last floor on the list and make his way back up to the penthouse entry hall.

“Congratulations Mister Odinson, you won.” Jarvis said as he rolled out of the elevator. “However, Ms. Potts would like you to stay right where you are, she will be up to speak to you immediately.”

“Did Stark get away from her?” Loki asked turning and rolling down the ramp on the far wall leading into the living room.

“Sadly no. She currently is yelling at him about the lap you both did down in the lobby. While I don’t believe she intends to kill you, I can’t entirely rule it out. So caution is advised when she arrives.”

OoooO

Loki felt good, really good, better than he could remember feeling in centuries. Of course he also felt incredibly angry, sometimes. Occasionally he was overjoyed. And sometimes it was all he could do not to break down in despair. Stark told him he now had more mood swings than a pregnant woman. While Loki wasn’t personally aware of how the women of Midgard acted when they were pregnant, he was aware of how they were depicted in their popular media. Or at least he was after he had googled it. And he had to admit that Stark might have a point. Loki was happy and euphoric one minute and ready to kill himself, or Stark, the next. If he hadn’t seen a copy of the recordings, certain parts of which were strangely muted, showing his personal healer Eir giving the medicine to Stark he would have refused to continue taking it. For as good as the medicine sometimes made him feel, when it wore off he couldn’t believe how unbelievably bad he felt. Really bad. Far, far worse than he had felt before Eir had shown up.

Which Loki hadn’t believed was even possible.

After the fight that they’d had on the third day he knows Stark wishes he had never started taking it.

OoooO

Loki was furious; all day had been wonderful until Stark had ruined it. He and Stark had entered into negotiations for him to permanently inscribe more powerful protections on Stark Tower. Somehow this had ended up with them making a side bet on whether or not this would include a basic protection rune for the neighboring buildings. Stark wanted protection for those extra buildings included in the price they had agreed on for the much stronger protections he was going to provide for the Tower. And he wanted Loki to do the work clandestinely.

“I’m flat tired of them trying to sue me every time something goes down in New York that happens within five miles of my place. They claim my tower is an attractive nuisance. We win, but it’s a big pain. Besides it takes them longer to fix their shit than it does me. And I end up having to put up with construction mess and road restrictions while they fuck around.” Stark had told him.

They had been walking around on the terrace, discussing what would have to be done with Loki pointing out various ways that it could be accomplished. He was ecstatic to be outside in the sunshine and both of them were having a good time trying to stick it to the other as they bargained when they got hung-up on this point. Stark wasn’t budging; he wanted the adjacent building included in the deal all for the same price.

Stark had gifted Ms. Potts with a few of Frigga’s jewels and had deconstructed several more doing tests... But those pieces lost to Ms. Potts and the material testing only accounted to a tiny fraction of the jewels he had been given. Therefore Stark felt that giving Loki half of Frigga’s remaining jewelry, was more than fair and that the extra buildings should be included in that same price. Loki was adamant that they wouldn’t be included, but was willing to give Stark a volume discount on the work.

Privately Loki was of the opinion that he deserved a much larger share of the remaining jewelry anyway. He had worked with Jarvis to come up with a list detailing the proper names and all the conversion factors needed for Stark to just flat buy the damn material he wanted from Asgard in its raw in forms. Furthermore Loki felt that the information he had provided listed was more than

enough of a perk on the deal since it included what would be fair prices for the materials in the various forms it was normally supplied in.

Of course Stark refused to see it that way and after arguing for more than an hour Loki suggested that they have a race to decide if the other buildings were included.

The day before, claiming it was to save his apartment, Stark had come up with an identical motorized chair and challenged him to a race down on his floor. They'd spent a few hours modifying the new chair to match the one that Loki had been using and then drew straws to see who would drive which one. As an added feature, they'd added two empty laundry racks as obstacles. While they were on the far end of his floor, behind the wall housing the emergency stairs and mechanical stacks, Minion and a robot Stark called Dummy would randomly shift the racks to a new location.

Loki hadn't had this much fun in years.

He hadn't even minded his chair being bounced off the wall a few times by Stark crowding him on the corners. After a while Jarvis had sent pizza and beer for them to retrieve from the elevator. Later still, they had added more and more laundry racks, mop buckets and even a mail cart that another robot named Butterfingers had brought up. Before they had called it a night, it had become more of a combination of obstacle course shoving match rather than a race.

Stark claimed that yesterday's course was too easy to use for the bet. Loki thought Stark was just hoping his familiarity with the building would give him an edge. However, his familiarity wasn't enough of an edge apparently and Loki had won despite being the first one to be caught by Ms. Potts.

Doubtless Stark would have demanded a rematch citing outside interference if Ms. Potts hadn't stormed up to the penthouse trailed by crestfallen Stark and several security guards brandishing a large pair of scissors.

"I know you don't need the damn thing anymore, get out of it!" Pepper yelled.

The minute Loki had slunk off to stand by Stark, she started cutting every wire and cable she could reach. After the guards pushed the now vandalized chairs into the elevator she started yelling again.

"What the hell were you two thinking?!" Pepper shouted irritation at the disruption of her day plain to see on her face.

Loki had centuries of experience getting out of trouble. He immediately hung his head and started shifting, doing his best sorry and contrite act.

"The other people in this building actually have work to do! They don't need you two racing around like idiots disturbing everyone! What if you had knocked someone over and hurt them?" Breathing heavily Pepper glared at them; Loki had given her a penitent sidelong glance and then returned to studying the floor.

"Pep, honestly I think you're over reacting... Stark began with a sheepish smile, obviously going for semi-dismissive humor. "Just a bit," He hurriedly added when she pinned him with her glare. "Aw come on Pep. No one got hurt."

For a supposed genius Stark was sometimes pretty thick. Not that Loki minded having Ms. Potts attention focused solely on Stark rather than both of them.

“And you!” Pepper jabbed Tony hard in the chest with a long polished fingernail.

“Ow Pep, that hur--.” Stark had started to protest when she rode right over him.

“You’re at least are old enough to know better!”

“Hey! He’s older than I am! Besides it was his idea. Tell her Loki.”

Stark was an idiot. Did he really think Loki would voluntarily put his head on Ms. Potts’ chopping block? Despite laughing on the inside, Loki had given him quick startled glance and pasted a confused look on his face, going so far as to bite his bottom lip. But just for a second. Loki didn’t want to overdo it after all.

“Seriously Rudolf? Seriously? You’re going to throw me under the bus on this?” Stark asked fuming.

“Stop. Just Stop.” Pepper held her hand up, pinched the bridge of her nose and took a deep breath. “I know you Tony, and I know that this is exactly the kind of stupid thing you like to do, so please don’t try to shift the blame.” She ignored his protesting squawk. “I am going to go back to work now. I don’t want to hear another thing out of you for the rest of the day. Hell for the rest of the week. Got that? That goes for *both* of you.” She commanded spinning around and heading out the door, the clacking of her heels sounding loud in the otherwise silent apartment.

While Loki was still in a pretty good mood and would have shrugged the whole incident off, Stark took his supposed betrayal to heart and spent the rest of the day sniping at Loki. His main complaint seemed to be all the trouble he had gone through when Loki was hurt and how ungrateful Loki was to stab him in the back.

Actually since he had been hurt while helping to protect Stark’s property, his chatelaine and his employees Loki very much resented the implication that he needed to be grateful. And if Stark didn’t stop moaning about how he was being stabbed in the back... Well thoughts of just going ahead and stabbing the irritating mortal occupied more and more of Loki’s imagination as both the afternoon and his own mood became darker. It wasn’t like Stark didn’t get yelled at by Pepper all the time, he didn’t have to let it ruin the whole day. After all if Stark had been the one with the opportunity to weasel out of trouble, he’d have done it himself.

After dinner they had ended up shouting at each other until Stark grabbed a bottle from behind the bar and went to hide in his workshop.

OoooO

Loki had woken up in a foul mood and it took a surreptitiously arranged visit from Bruce to talk him into taking his meds. Stubborn the god might be, but he apparently was not willing to anger someone who was only a necklace removal away from becoming a big green rage machine.

Bruce had joined them for breakfast and listened with amusement as the grumpy god handed Tony his ass in the final negotiations for getting Stark Tower protected. Tony had tried to delay their talk hoping they could finalized everything later in the day.

“I mean, really, don’t you want to finish your breakfast in peace?”

By which Tony meant he hoped to delay the final agreement until Loki’s meds kicked in and Tony could negotiate with a Loki who was as high as a kite. Not a god with centuries of negotiating experience who would give a roomful of Stark International Lawyers a run for their money. Tony hadn’t actually whined when he asked this of course, but from Bruce’s chuckle and Loki’s raised

brows it had been close.

So they finished up now. While Tony might have been a bit disappointed, Bruce had pointed out that doing it now would have the added benefit of not getting him in more trouble with Pepper due to another ill-advised bet.

Loki had chuckled darkly at that.

Bastard.

Tony got up to refill his coffee; passing behind the god he had half shoved Loki off his stool in annoyance.

“Quit laughing, you’re still a bastard for throwing me under the bus with Pepper.” The first time Tony had used that phrase, Loki had needed to get Jarvis to explain it to him. Now the jerk knew what he was saying.

Tony was surprised a minute later when said god looked up from his plate with a serious expression. “Perhaps it was not well done of me. Honestly I just wanted to see if it would work on Ms. Potts.” Fleetingly Loki’s eyes lit up and little crinkles appeared at the corners of his lips at the remembrance of exactly how well it worked. Serious once again he asked, “Shall I ask Jarvis to call her so I can confess?”

Shit.

Now Loki was giving *him* the wide eyed shamed puppy dog look. Tony was pretty sure he now knew how Loki had kept Thor from killing him during all of those centuries of mischief.

Damn.

Disarmed, Tony sighed lifting his cup to take another sip. “No. I think we need to leave her alone.”

“What?” He demanded when Bruce started to chuckle.

“Nothing, not a thing. It’s all good.”

“Then why are you sitting there with a smirk on your face Bruce?”

OoooO

While Loki was up in his room preparing lesson plans, Tony was working in his lab, setting up the specifications for the tower protection system and cutting adhesive backed rubber masks using the rune pattern that Loki had drawn for him. Loki insisted that each one had to be hand drawn with purpose, whatever the hell that meant, but did admit that securely covering the areas that weren’t part of the rune would greatly speed up the creation of each one since the mask would prevent drips, smears or badly drawn lines. Loki could just remove the mask, leaving a perfectly drawn acid etched pattern behind ready to be activated.

Tony was going to have the twenty meter aluminum strips placed up on the roof so they could be installed, edges overlapping just outside the perimeter of the tower. Making sure Loki was in a locked security harness so he could lean over the edge and activate them was pretty much the only worry that Tony had. Suicidal people ideally should not be allowed to lean over roofs.

The other flat surfaces on the small roofs and in the sub basements were also going to be acid etched into the concrete and then protectively sealed. He would most likely use something simpler

but similar on the lesser installations of the neighboring buildings. Once activated and sealed, Loki said they could be covered or painted over to hide them. If they did they did them late at night, perhaps during a weekend people would be less likely to notice the smoke generated when they activated. Hopefully it should be enough that no one would find out what they were doing.

Several hours later, over a dinner of takeaway Thai, he and Loki were watching a Jetson's Marathon on the Cartoon channel.

"So this is what the genius Tony Stark spends his time doing? Watching mindless children's entertainment?" Loki sneered, as he picked through his larb gai, spearing a few bits of lettuce and cucumber before teasing a bit of the spicy chicken salad onto his fork.

"I'll have you know that Rosie was my first crush and the inspiration for Dummy." Tony retorted taking another slug of beer. He waved the now empty bottle towards the television. "And one of these days I'm going to build me a car just like George Jetson's. Although mine will be much cooler looking."

"Ah. Well we don't have anything with a big clear bubble on it, but we do have similar floating transportation. It even uses small directional propulsion devices like these ones." He waved a fork towards the television where George's car was putt-putting through the sky with the little trolling-motor-thing propelling it through the sky. "Without of course needing bulky lift systems like I see on Midgard planes and helicopters."

Oh really?

Despite his professed disdain for children's show, Loki soon turned his attention back to the cartoon. Thankfully the god's mood hadn't taken its nightly turn to the cranky side like it normally did as his meds wore off. Tony thought it might be because Loki had been working on stuff that actually engaged his attention all day. But regardless of the reason the engineer was not about to do anything that would trigger a bad mood in the god.

Tony started racking his brain for a way to keep Loki's spirits up so he would keep talking. After two more beers and a discussion of what kind of lift capabilities were possible with Cavorite, the alloy that Asgard used for the hulls of their sky ships, Tony came to a decision. Since happy gods did not get into screaming matches with him... And they talked tech as long as he avoided certain subjects Tony decided it therefore behooved him to keep Loki happy.

A happy god was necessary, not just for Tony's selfish needs like tech talk and his getting his medical clearance from Bruce to begin teaching. It would also help the god's overall mental health. After all Tony was in charge of that too right? Granted he could be all boring and hire a shrink or something but this way would be more fun for both of them.

He pointed his empty beer bottle at Loki.

Were five too many?

"You. Shower. Now. Put on your company clothes we're going out. And you need to make sure you go to the bathroom before we leave, 'cause I don't want us to be taking potty breaks in pairs like a couple of chicks. Jarvis, call me a driver, tell him to be here within the next hour."

Forty-five minutes later after knocking once, Tony strolled into the guest room that Loki was currently using. "You'll need to wear these," he said laying a pair of Louis Vuitton Evasion sunglasses and a white gold Patek Philippe watch with a black leather band on his dresser.

Loki had been brushing his hair in the bathroom, but now stood in the doorway between the two rooms. Tony's abrupt arrival to the bedroom caused him to freeze momentarily before hesitantly continuing into the bedroom.

"Why?" Loki asked after looking over the items that Tony was setting on the dresser.

"Your clothes, remind me, we need to get you some decent clothes. But if we bling you out with the right accessories, you'll pass for tonight."

"Oh." Loki said, touching the watch with his left hand.

"We running short on time, give me the brush. I don't think your first outing should be with long loose hair.

"Sir," Jarvis interrupted. "I fear you are being indiscrete."

Oh fuck. How stupid am I? Tony thought.

"Damn. Um... Sorry Jarv?"

Distraction. Yeah. Now even.

Tony reached over to grab the brush that Loki was holding down to his side. He had it out of Loki's hand before the god even noticed he had grabbed it. Once he did, his eyes threatened to pop out of his head.

Okay.... Not going to make a fuss.

"Sit, hurry up we're running late." Loki's hair was still slightly damp and the gorgeous tortoise shell brush with an elaborate gold inlay Celtic knot design that Tony had never seen before, made short work of taming it into a braid. Loki sat stiffly the entire time Tony had the brush in his hand, almost collapsing in relief when Tony handed it back to him without a word. He pretended not to notice as Loki hurriedly tucked the obviously Asgardian brush out of sight in a drawer. Apparently 'five hour energy' elixir was not the only thing Eir had left in his tower.

"So." Loki asked slipping on the sunglasses and watch. "Are we ready Stark?"

OoooO

At first Loki had been worried when Stark told the driver to take them to a dance club but he didn't see any two people doing the same dance so he just picked out a few moves and followed the style of whatever woman he was dancing with. Even without being able to use his powers of persuasion due to the noise level, Loki had no problem finding partners.

Every now and then Stark would come over wrap an arm around his back and drag him to the table that the club had reserved for them. It was a good bit quieter here; loud enough that you couldn't hear the people at the table beside you, but not so much that you had to shout to be heard. The night became a blur of exchanging stories with Stark, heads close to keep others from over hearing them. Loki enjoyed watching the noisy crowds on the dance floor. He liked drinking exotic beverages that Stark made fun of him for trying. He liked having scantily clad Midgardian females crawling into the booth, climbing practically on top of him. And he really liked dragging them back out to the dance floor.

The club was warm and both Loki and Stark soon shed their jackets.

“Like it?” Stark shouted dragging him away from his current partner and steering him off the dance floor and back to the table for the third time or so.

“Yes, very much!” Loki yelled back, “What is that one?” he pointed at a waiter going past with a tall thin glass that had caught his eye. The frozen looking concoction was orange on the bottom and dark raspberry colored on the top and garnished with a peach slice.

“Seriously Rudolf?” Stark laughed leaning against him for balance. “Champagne Bellinis are a chick’s drink.”

Frowning he looked down at the flushed mortal.

“Hey! No pouting.” Stark smacked his belly lightly, “I didn’t say you couldn’t have one, I’m just saying those are chick drinks.”

“I wasn’t pouting Stark.”

“You so were pouting. I wouldn’t worry though; it’s a cute look for you.” Stark pushed him into the booth and climbed in behind him. So besides Adamantite what else do I need to make this sky ship metal?” He asked, waving a waiter over to take their order.

A while later Stark was sketching out his first arc reactor on a napkin using a pen he had sweet talked a waitress out of and explaining how it worked. Sometime after that they were stumbling out of the club hanging on each other and the two girls they had invited back to the tower, when multiple flashes blinded Loki despite the sun glasses Stark has insisted he put back on before they left.

Hours later Loki woke to someone pounding on his door. A pounding that was echo’d in his own head. Girly drinks or not, he had obviously had too many last night for his mortal body.

But despite greeting the day with a fuzzy head and a slight headache he’d had a wonderful time last night. Just getting out of the tower had been delightful. The energy from the club and all the dancing had been a lot of fun and he had enjoyed both the conversation and having lovely young women pressing against them in the booth. Or indeed piled on top of them in the back of Stark’s car in a delightful tangle of legs and lips.

Stark had whispered something to both the ladies that caused them both to giggle and eye him speculatively as they had gotten out of the car at Stark tower. When he’d asked what was so amusing, instead of answering the women had pressed Loki into a corner of the elevator. There was so much stroking, kissing and rubbing going on that even in the short amount of time it took to arrive at the penthouse it was all Loki could do to get loose and drag his companion off to his own room.

The woman beside him stirred but didn’t wake as the door opened. He cracked an eyelid to see Stark slipping into his room, toss a robe at him and almost yank him out of bed.

“Come on,” Stark hissed in a low voice, snagging some of his clothes from the closet before hustling him out of the room and closing the door. “You can shower down in the lab while Jarvis gets rid of them for us. We’ll have our breakfast down there. That will give them time to clear out.”

“Stark, I just--”

“Then you can check the samples of acid, metal and masks.”

“Stark--”

“We need to do a trial run so we can finalize our material orders.” Stark said as the elevator doors slid open for them.

“Stark!” Loki said, swinging the mortal around to look at him while the elevator doors closed.

“What?!” Stark asked, looking slightly flustered at being physically manhandled.

“I wanted to tell you that I had a good time last night.” He smiled widely at the short mortal.

“Thank you. I haven’t had that much fun in a very long time.”

Eyes lighting up, Stark grinned and slapped at his arm. “Oh Rudolf, you have no idea, let’s bang out these tests out today and we’ll go somewhere else tonight and see what other fun we can scare up.”

Stark began giving Jarvis orders to clear the women out of their rooms and then started to order breakfast. Once Loki had chosen between waffles or omelets he tuned out the rest of the conversation.

Over the centuries Loki had of course been out many times with Thor, his friends and some of his own from the court but he had seldom had as much fun as he’d had last night. Last night he enjoyed himself without worrying about preventing Thor from causing any trouble that might reach Odin’s ears. Nor had Loki had to deal with any left handed remarks about his magic usage or fighting style. He had not had to make nice with any sons of politically important men, nor had his choice of companions for the evening been questioned or derided. Not once last night had he had to worry about a single thing. While he is sure it had happened before, it must have been a very long time ago. So long that he honestly can’t remember when that was.

OoooO

And they did have more fun that night and the next night and the one after that. And Loki enjoyed them equally as much as the first time. On the fourth night they went out, Stark wanted to go somewhere different, this time they went to a sports bar. A place where people who followed organized contests gathered to talk about them with other likeminded folk. Or as was in their case, since neither he nor Stark followed these contests, they went to drink or socialize without dancing or incredibly loud music.

The chicken wings they ate were as spicy as anything he had ever had in eastern Álfheimr. They washed their food down with lots of different beers and played pool, which Loki had never done before. They also shot darts which made him a lot of money as Stark backed him, while he suckered several people into making ridiculously big bets with him on trick shots. He and a laughing Stark were just splitting up the money that Loki had won from the last dolt unwise enough to bet against them when that Natasha woman walked in. She was accompanied by a gracefully stepping, but not overly tall brunette male. While the woman seemed outwardly placid, the male looked like he wanted to do more than shoot dirty looks at Loki. A lot more.

Chapter End Notes

Okay. Personally, my favorite part was vengeful Pepper with scissors and Loki slinking off to stand by Tony.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of

person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima Mia. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

It's Not All Fun and Games

Chapter Summary

So... A Billionaire, Assassin, Sniper and Norse God are all sitting at a bar....

Chapter Notes

You may be glad to know that the dreaded Chapter 50 has been slain. It fought hard, the pelt is in terrible shape but damnit the thing is finally dead and currently in BetaLand being skinned and tanned for your eventual amusement.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 40 - It's not all fun and games

The first night they had gone out, Loki had worn his inexpensive off the rack clothes and managed to pass with a bit of bling. 'Cause hey, the guy still looked gorgeous in sweats. But it had made Tony seethe. He was Tony Fucking Stark and if he was going to be seen with someone on a regular basis they were going to be the envy of everyone or he would know the reason why. Hell he'd even got Rhodey to accept a few suits and a couple of custom made uniforms from the best bespoke tailors in California.

Not that it hadn't been a hassle getting his god to accept them. While the guy was clearly used to better clothing and accepted Tony's claim that the proper 'garb' was required in a few of the places they were going to, he was concerned about unnecessary expenses. But having worn bespoke clothing his whole life, the Asgardian was well aware that there were some situations where it was flatly required.

So one of Tony's personal tailors, Charles an incurable player, had shown up that first afternoon with his assistant Rebecca. He managed to work a little flirting and a little fitting in between Tony and Loki's material testing for the roof. And later that evening his slightly hippy, non-flirting, washed out blonde assistant returned. In addition to being Charles assistant, Rebecca also acted as a personal shopper for certain valued customers. Like anyone Tony Stark personally called them about. At any rate, she brought several casual outfits with her for Loki to wear until his suits were ready for their second fitting.

"Everything going okay with Loki, Jarvis?" Tony asked as he worked on a few things that he wanted to finish before quitting for the evening.

"Yes sir, I had spoken with Ms. Rebecca earlier about splitting Mister Odinson's bill in two and charging the majority of it to you. This should not present a problem since your tailor does not even have a web presence that would give Mister Odinson an idea of his customary charges. Also I was able to impress upon Ms. Rebecca that you would greatly appreciate a certain amount of discrete duplicity to keep Mister Odinson from becoming aware of the true cost of his purchases."

"Great. So no problems then. Good."

“No sir, no problems. Although Ms. Rebecca seemed most amused, she quite understands.”

Tony flushed slightly. He was well aware of what Rebecca ‘thought’ she understood. Not that it was true. He felt himself grow a bit warmer, not that he was hopeful that it might become true... Much.

The greatly discounted amount drawn from the god’s account was still far above what he had spent on his previous outfits. But it was calculated to be affordable with the salary Loki was going to be paid for teaching SI employees. When Loki had still fretted about the cost of clothes necessary for the venues that Tony frequented, Jarvis and the oh-so-discreet Rebecca had convinced him that he would need all of it once he began teaching and if he was going to travel in the circles that Tony inhabited.

Later that evening, Tony thought that all the hassle and lies had been well worth the effort because didn’t Loki now look like the god that he was. Several pairs of black and grey wool slacks had been hastily altered to hug him in all kinds of wonderful places, as had several shirts. However Tony’s personal favorite so far was the outfit that Loki was wearing tonight, dark charcoal grey slacks, a slim black leather belt which was topped with slim cut green V-neck silk cashmere sweater. The damn sweater fit the trickster like a glove, left nothing to the imagination and was as soft as a cloud to the touch.

And damned if a lot of people that evening didn’t want to touch it, not Tony of course, or perhaps just a bit. He did so love pretty people. And smart people. And tricky people. And fuck if Loki wasn’t all three.

It had taken a while and they still had a whole table full of different containers, but they had found several beers that Loki actually liked. They were all fruity ones, but hey the Asgardian was used to drinking honeyed mead and fricken fairy wines from Elf-land so no surprise there. Tony was just glad he’d found something labeled beer that the guy would even drink without wrinkling his nose up. So if Mischief Incarnate wanted to drink a cherry beer called Founder Cerise or that damn strawberry raspberry Bridgeport Stumptown Tart crap, let him. It wasn’t like any one is going to ask the tall leggy bastard for his man card because he was ordering them.

The Trickster hadn’t quite got the hang of pool yet, but it only took him one round of darts to get the weight of them down pat. Not that he had hit a bulls eye or anything, but he had leaned against Tony and murmured in his ear exactly where he was going to place the dart which was all kinds of lovely just by itself in a ‘*dark and don’t go there Tony*’ kind of way. Tony blamed the sweater brushing up against him for those thoughts.

It had amused the hell out of Tony to see the god suckering all those rich assholes into making high dollar bets while their dates fluttered around him. Of course lean mean and scrumptious also had quite a few women regarding him sourly as *their* dates fluttered. However Tony did however take comfort in the fact that no matter how blatantly he flirted, all Loki really seemed to be interested in was winning as much of their money as possible. And fuck if Loki couldn’t con the stupid bastards into making some big assed bets. He always let them go first and he always made sure he just beat their score.

They had a booth a few feet away, but Loki had so many people lining up to take a shot at him that Tony had also commandeered one of the tiny pub tables to use as his bank while Loki was fleecing the locals. You would have thought the dumb shits would have caught on sooner.

At various times during the evening Tony was having a hard time deciding which was more of a torment for him. It was a toss-up between the hot blonde who was pressed up beside him running her fingers high up the inside of his denim clad leg, or the Asgardian bastard draped over the back

of his black Eurythmics Revenge t-shirt. The fingers were indeed distracting... But so was the warm breath whispering wicked commentary into his ear as they debated who Loki's next victim would be. Honestly if you put a gun to his head Tony wouldn't have been able to say which one was making it harder for him to think coherently.

At any rate, his plan to keep the god happy after his meds tapered off in the evening seemed to have worked. Loki was in an excellent mood as he collected from the amazed and disbelieving marks. While the latest mark's date commiserated with him, Loki wafted over, pressed a kiss and a fifty on Blondie, declaring her his good luck charm and handed the rest of the money to Tony to hold. He was just whispering to Tony that he was torn between going after the black guy with the really nice watch and shoes that Tony had pointed out earlier or taking a bit of a break to let some fresh blood congregate so he could start all over again when Tony spotted trouble walking over towards them.

"Stay here a minute." He told Loki, who laid a hand on his shoulder and followed Tony's glance.

"Tasha!" Tony shouted as joyful as a man who has been determined to taste every craft beer on the menu.

Tony glanced back for a moment to make sure Loki wasn't following him. The blonde chick was now leaning against Loki's back, her arms draped over his shoulders while the two of them watched the other players. And Loki was draped so elegantly over Tony's recently vacated bar stool that maybe someone should take Loki's man card away. Hell the god was just asking for it as he lounged there sipping his cherry colored beer, which in of itself was an offence against real men everywhere, while other men's dates surreptitiously checked him out. Sipping for crying out loud. What real man sips beer? With three perfectly good reasons to pick a fight with Loki, Tony wouldn't have been surprised if some he-man decided to take offense. And honestly, it had been such a quiet night so far Tony wouldn't have minded a bit of excitement if they did. At least for as long as it took the god of sinfully hot beer sipping to hand their ass to them...

"Tony." Natasha's called impatiently, recalling his attention.

And now they had Red and her boy walking in, obviously looking for them. But the best defense was a good offense, and hey... Tony could do offensive like nobody's business.

"Clint my man, sit down and help me drink some of these." Tony called waving the jeans and leather jacketed duo to their booth.

"Jesus Stark, what's with all these beers?" Clint asked making a face at the table that was literally covered with bottles, beakers and pitchers of beer.

"Tony we need to talk." Natasha said regarding him steadily before she turned to look over to where Loki was lounging. "To both of you... Privately."

The stared at each other a moment. Tony was fairly sure he could get rid of her, but decided it might be best to see what had crawled up SHIELD's ass and died, so he stepped back over to the darts area.

"Yo! Sweetheart, time to take a hike." Tony said, peeling the blonde off of Loki and waving her away. Ignoring Loki's growing tension and her sudden pout, he hustled the god over and shoved him into the booth. Smirking at Clint's irritation he sat beside Loki, motioning for Natasha and Clint to slide down on the other side of the table.

Tony waved to the waitress; who took all their empties away and promised them a tray of clean

glasses right away. Clint was having a hard time hiding how tense and angry he was getting, but Natasha obviously had a very tight hold on his leash. So over all, Tony wasn't too worried.

Loki looked at them both with a crooked little smirk, obviously channeling his inner obnoxious pre-teen. "I would guess Ms. Natasha, this is where your 'friend' drags up all manner of grievances against me that I won't be able to hear due to Odin's geas." At Clint's deepening frown both Loki's smile and eyes widened until he was the very picture of manic cheerfulness. "Yes Stark explained it to me and I do ask that you not act so surprised, only an idiot would be unable to see how much you hate me." His voice and his expression both dropped the pretense of good cheer. "And I assure you that no matter what else you think of me, I am far from being an idiot."

Natasha gave him one last look before choosing to ignore Loki's presence and speak directly to Tony. "What are you doing Tony? This is hardly prison." She tapped Clint's chest with the back of her hand and he took a sheaf of papers out of his jacket's inner pocket and handed them to her. "Fury is currently having kittens. While almost no one has a good picture of him from before, it is possible someone would find out and then we would be stuck explaining to the Asgardians why someone killed him."

"Æsir," Loki told her over the top of his glass. "Asgard is the name of the realm and the capital, Æsir is the name of the people who dwell there."

"Yeah and this is Earth," Tony said absently opening the package Natasha had handed to him. "No matter how many times I tell you, you don't get it right."

Tipping his beer glass in acknowledgement of Tony's riposte, Loki smiled and took another sip, craning his neck to see the papers that Tony had in his hands.

"Tony why is he here and not locked up somewhere?" Demanded Natasha.

"Work release." Tony shot back before throwing a glance at Loki. "Nosy!" Tony mockingly chided, pulling away and turning a bit. Opening the package, he's pretty sure of what he was going to see. Yep. Paparazzi pictures. Leafing through them he's actually amazed that only one was even slightly noteworthy. Honestly not even anything that would cause Pepper scream at him or Loki to freak out.

Much.

"Stark what are you doing?" Natasha asked, her eyes boring into him looking for any hint of deception. "Are you screwing him?"

Tony started. "Geeze Nat. Blunt much? Give me a little credit for self-restraint will ya?" Not that Tony hasn't thought about doing that exact thing once or twice. Or actually many more times than, several this evening in fact, not that he intends to mind you... At least not without a very clear sign that such an event would be welcomed.

"Why should I, you don't have any," She replied dispassionately, absently brushing a wisp of her short red hair out of her eyes.

"Of course I do, I just don't exercise it often." Brown eye's glinting mischievously he leered at her, "Self-restraint is not nearly as much fun as having someone else restrain you."

"Tony, we do know all about you, even if you think we don't. So I am well aware that your public image isn't all there is to you. Which is why I figured I'd ask straight out."

"Really Stark?" Clint looked back and forth between them and then snorted, "Men and bondage?"

Not that I'm surprised. I always figured you for a perv."

Okay, that's it; Clint was definitely no longer on his Christmas card list.

"Although you hit that and people are going to think you're not only insane but also a sugar daddy."

No!

That fucking bird brain did not just insinuate that Tony was old?! Besides, despite looking like a twenty-four year old, Loki was actually a lot older than he was. Tony felt his chest tighten in anger, pulling on the scar tissue where his old arc reactor site used to be.

Scars which were fading beautifully, thank you Eir.

At any rate Tony's eyes narrowed. He was just about to unload on Clint when Loki's knee underneath the table bumped against him. Recalling him.

"Stark, could you please introduce me to Ms. Natasha's judgmental little companion who speaks of me as if I wasn't sitting right in front of him?" Loki was looking at Clint as if he was something nasty stuck on the bottom of the Trickster's shoes. He shifted his attention to Natasha. "And how is your Agent Coulson, I'm surprised he isn't here." His unspoken but clearly understood sub meaning being that Natasha needed to be kept on a leash to stay out of trouble.

The one side of Natasha's lip twitched up, her head taking on a mocking little tilt. "He's back in his office keeping Director Fury from exploding at Tony latest little escapade. He sent us here to escort you both back to the tower... Now."

Tony is not necessarily a happy drunk. He is a go with the flow drunk. And up until now, his flow had been amusing and entertaining to watch. So he had been amused and entertained. Now he has Natasha here. Not only is she not amusing, she is cock blocking him because he hasn't yet picked out his partner for the evening. And worst of all she is causing tension in the source of this evening's entertainment. And this is really starting to harsh his mellow.

"Do we care about them Stark?"

Tony had just been thinking how he is Tony Fucking Stark, not some pre-teen out past his curfew, when Loki asked his question. And as questions go... It's not a bad one...

He glanced over, Loki was regarding him steadily, a nasty glitter in his eyes. Tony felt his irritation fade. This... This could be amusing. His growing smile was answered by Loki's own. Except there was more than a bit of feral insanity in Loki's. The god wrinkled his nose happily at Tony before turning to pin Barton to his seat with waves of pure crazy pouring off of him.

"I ask again little man, who are you that your name is so unimportant that no one mentions it or introduces you even when questioned?" Clint's color drained. He obviously did not like being the full focus of Loki's attention. While Tony hoped it wasn't a bad flash back or anything, he was drunk enough that he really didn't care. Much.

"Leave him alone Loki." Natasha snapped.

Loki never took his eyes off of Clint, but Tony was willing to be that he was using his peripheral vision to closely watch Natasha.

"I take no orders from a mewling quim I have already defeated once." Loki's voice was heavy with

threat, but his expression remained amused. “After all, what can you threaten me with? Last time you used two guns while I had nothing and I still ended up disarming you and stripping your clothes from you.” Clint flinched.

“Oh my. I do hope I haven’t caused a rift,” His already impossibly wide smile grew even wider. “It seems like this is all news to your diminutive friend. Which part were you unaware of I wonder? That we fought? That she was easily defeated? Or that I’ve seen the fair Natasha’s many charms?”

Raising his chin, Loki looked down with a beautifully taunting grin. “Ah. You didn’t tell him you lost your clothes. So he most likely doesn’t know that Stark carried you away, trussed up in your own garments. Or how long you spent--”

“That’s enough Loki.” Natasha said evenly. Tony couldn’t see her one hand, but he was willing to bet that it was currently under the table holding Clint back.

“Or what? From what I know of Midgar—Earth, I have broken no laws. Stark is a prince of your realm and I am a prince of mine. So why should either of us listen to you? Or your director?”

“You must be fucking Stark.”

“Must I?” Loki raised a brow, looking him over Tony critically before brushing back an unruly bit of brown hair. “He is quite delightful for a Mid— Mortal. But I don’t believe seeing it written anywhere that my having sex with him was part of his contractual remuneration.” Loki’s brows lowered in concentration and he bit his lower lip a moment in thought before looking Tony in the eye. “Was it?”

Tony grinned, his mood improving by the minute. “Unfortunately no. But ya know, we could renegotiate.” Loki’s face crinkled adorably before turning back to the two SHIELD agents.

“I am here with the approval of the royal family of Asgard. So long as I break no laws or seek to evade my keeper,” Loki flicked Tony’s cheek with his forefinger.

“Ow.”

“You have no jurisdiction over me.” Loki purred, giving the smoldering SHIELD agents a melting smile.

And then Clint lost it. Hissing at him to lower his voice, Natasha had no chance of shutting him up, it was all that she could do to keep him from shouting.

The assassin rose enough to see over the high backed booth, then her eyes darted to the group of dart players who had taken over Tony’s other table checking to see if anyone was paying attention to them. With the exception of Blondie, who hastily looked away, apparently no one was so she sank back down never taking her hand off of Clint.

And yes Clint was still mad, understandably, about the whole mind control thing. And pissed at Tony... which he totally didn’t think was quite fair, it wasn’t like Tony had done anything to him. But as long as he kept it to a low hissing denunciation Red apparently decided to allow him to get it out of his system.

Tony was a bit bummed when Loki stopped playing with Tony’s hair and picked up a beer to take a sip. He put the beer back down but then gave Clint his full attention. However before Tony could get too bummed out, Clint apparently reached the absolute end of his patience his hand diving into the opening of his black leather jacket.

A dart buried itself deep into the booth beside his head just as Natasha hissed “NO!” and her hand tightened around Clint’s arm tugging to keep him from rising.

Tony had slipped a portable repulsor onto this hand and would have blasted Clint under the table... à la Han Solo but he did have to admit that the dart stopped Clint without injury or escalation. Something his repulsor would not have been able to do. And Tasha would have no doubt taken possibly deadly objection to him blasting Clint, even if he didn’t do it at full power. Besides how bad assed was it to make someone like Natasha pause using only a pub dart... Very bad assed... And all kinda hot.

“The next person to make a sudden move will find my second dart buried somewhere in them, possibly their eye. Please don’t think I won’t be able to launch the third before anyone has time to react.”

“Stark what is this man’s name, since his companion doesn’t think enough of him to perform an introduction.”

Apparently very bad Asgardian manners there.

“You know very well who I am you bastard!” Clint’s teeth were clenched together.

“Clint Barton,” Tony said. “Agent Clint Barton.” He nodded towards Natasha, “And she is Agent Natasha Romanoff. Both of them work for SHIELD like Coulson. He’s a marksman; she is a spy and assassin.”

“Agent Barton are you reaching for a weapon?” Loki asked.

Natasha’s dug her nails into Clint’s left arm and after a moment his empty right hand slowly moved from inside of his jacket to flat on the table in front of him.

“Thank you,” Loki said. “I don’t really know who either of you are. After all I only caught one sentence in ten of your little tirade.” His eyes flicked towards Tony a moment. “Although I suspect I should, I don’t, so please don’t expect me to understand your anger.” He paused for a heartbeat, “Nor should you expect me to put up with your threats.”

Looking back and forth from the deadly duo to Loki, Tony was starting to wonder what the hell Eir put in that tonic of hers that had Loki going from near catatonic to bat shit crazy in only a week. Even without knowing who Natasha was exactly, Loki should have been able to tell that she was lethal.

“Look, SHIELD doesn’t want any trouble, but you shouldn’t be here.” Loki’s raised an inquiring brow and Natasha amended her statement. “In this bar. Any bar. Hell Stark is enough of a loose cannon, but the two of you together? Drinking? Drunk? Anything could happen.” Natasha said, watching Loki carefully while still keeping a hold on Clint.

“And I am sure you would love to tell me what might occur, even if the why of it all won’t make any sense to me.”

“Someone could recognize you and start a riot. What would happen to us if they managed to kill you? It’s one thing for you to be sequestered in Stark’s Tower, that’s allowed. But out here in public?”

“Actually Nat. Anything I allow is allowed. Per my contract.” That plus the fact that there were no actual charges filed, Tony figured he was in the clear on all of it. Sure Fury might bitch. And send these two PIA’s to bug him, but legally... He was golden.

“And so if Stark allows this,” Loki gave him a beautiful smile, so wide and cheerful it made Tony feel as warm and happy as the best day he had ever had on his private beach in Hawaii. “Then by extension so does Odin All Father.”

Natasha might be all stone faced and Clint might look like he had swallowed a lemon, but Loki’s smile became a thin, corners curling, totally Ginch-y kind of smile. Kind of like the smile a spastic kitten might get as it flexes its tiny razor sharp claws prior to pouncing. “I will tell you for your own personal safety, the last person who interfered with one of Odin’s decrees and lived was... Well... Me.”

“Hey. I have that kind of a relationship with Fury too. How fun is that?”

Loki took another sip of his beer; he motioned with the glass to the two Agents across the table. “I feel I should also warn you Odin is not a very forgiving individual. Also, I have had recent evidence that my current value still outweighs whatever annoying, heinous or treasonous act landed me on this mud hole of a planet.”

“Hey! We like it here you know.” Tony protested halfheartedly.

Clint snorted. “Annoying? You seriously think you would be exiled and imprisoned for just being annoying?”

The dark god shrugged. “Why not? It’s happened before.”

Okay. Imprisoned for just being annoying? That wasn’t something Tony thought he would hear. And from the expression on his face he didn’t think Clint thought so either. Of course when it came to Natasha, you could never really tell what she was thinking. Hell the way her and Fury thought, they most likely wish they could do something similar to Tony when he was being annoying. Thank god he didn’t live in Asgard. They seemed to be a bit free with the prison sentences up there.

“Tony,” Natasha channeled her inner Coulson voice. “We can make you leave, but we would rather not to cause a scene.”

“Tasha, I don’t think so.” Tony picked up a soft pretzel from the basket in the middle of the table, tearing a piece off of it. “I am armed you know and as for Lo here, you might want to remember that you lost the last fight you had with him. Decisively I might add.” He smirked and popped the bit of salted dough into his mouth smiling easily in response to her glare.

“He’s a god. Of course I lost the fight.”

“You can’t have it both ways Red. He can’t have beaten you because he’s a god but be in danger because he isn’t. And I do have some really bad news for you ‘Tasha, he’s not a god right now. He’s just that much better than you. Even without his godly powers, so you might want to think twice about trying any more shit, especially in my tower where Jarvis will alert me if you do.” Tony played with the pretzel a bit more, worrying another lobe off of it. “Because if he doesn’t hand you your ass again, I will. And if somehow you do get the drop on him, his brother and mother will rain fire down on you and Fury from on high. Not to mention what I will do if you get me in trouble with Asgard.

While he and Natasha were having their pissing contest, a part of him had noticed Loki looking thoughtfully. “You got something to add to the conversation here Reindeer Games?”

Gesturing towards Natasha Loki asked, “She works for the man you were worried about finding

out about me writing yes?”

“Yeah. And?”

“So since they know I am here on Mid- Earth, I can go back to publishing my books?”

Natasha perked. She naturally would be interested in that, Tony thought with a wry smile. On the other hand, he personally would just as soon Fury not know that he had negotiated a deal to keep other-realm info for his own use. Because honestly, while Tony is well aware that he is basically a selfish bastard... He would just as soon not give everyone else, starting with the scary head of a secret government agency hard proof of that fact.

Tony slid sideways on the booth and because Loki was crazy tall, he ended up rising up on one knee, almost facing the back of the booth to put his mouth right by the god’s ear. “Yeah about that. How ‘bout you still let me read them first and then maybe decide which ones to delay for a year or so.”

Loki’s eye flitted over towards Natasha and Clint a moment gifting them with another of his crazy Grinch smiles before he wrapped his long fingered hand into the front of Tony’s shirt and pulled him down so Loki was looking right at Tony’s profile, using Tony to block the view of his lips as he breathed his reply directly into Tony’s ear.

“It will cost you Stark.”

“So tell me something I don’t know.”

“I think I can go along with that,” Loki whispered letting Tony go, looking across the table. “But, your friends want us to leave,” he said at a more normal volume. “Do you want to go now?”

“Not really. I’ve been having a good time. Watching pretty people. It’s been great,” Tony said settling back down on the booth while still sitting mainly sideways facing the god. “Interesting work during the day, fun in the evening... and not a board meeting or training exercise with sanctimonious team members to ruin my day. What’s not to love.”

“Tony.”

“Natasha,” Tony retorted mockingly in the same weary tone.

Loki was amused. “So you think I’m pretty Stark?”

“Passable Rudolf, passable.” Tony said patting him a few times on the arm. Ignoring that damn soft sweater that just begged to be petted. He smirked at Clint who was having a difficult time not letting his lip curl in disgust.

“Stark sitting here talking to them isn’t as much fun as we were having before.” The god pouted adorably and looked towards the bar. “And if I am not mistaken they seemed to have called for reinforcements.”

“Natasha?” Tony cocked his head towards the bar before winking at Clint who was looking back and forth from him to Loki. Clint’s expression was blank, but he Tony would have been willing to bet a lot that he was troubled by the casual way the god just sat there.

“As long as there’s no trouble, they won’t bother us,” the redhead said without even turning around to look.

This time Loki was the one to turn, draw close and whisper in an ear. It seemed the god had a plan.

Chapter End Notes

The more observant of you noticed that we now have an end count on this fic. Whoooo Hooo! Only 67K to go... and I am thinking of having the next thirteen chapters post a bit faster. How is this possible you ask? Ah.... Because the when this arc ends the other 70k+ of Story are going to be posted as a series of One-Shots. Partially because the second section heads off in a *COMPLETELY* different direction and partially because this fic is going to clock in at 215k which is more than long enough and totally scaring off the Short Attention Span readers.

I just freaking can't wait for the second arc to start. And I swear.... Christ as my witness... The next time I do a fic like this I am going to say the hell with it and only have a five page prolog as my story lead up. I think 100K of story building was a bit excessive. Oh... And it will let me get to the fun stuff faster... Although I sadly still can't really get the hang of writing smut.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful Mima Mia. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Hel Hath No Fury

Chapter Summary

Clint get schooled and Tony gets careless.

Chapter Notes

Due to enthusiastic responses to chapter 40, here is another chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 41 - Hel hath no Fury

“Stark,” Two of Loki’s long elegant fingers brushed down his cheek, pressing on Tony’s jaw, turning him to face Loki.

And didn’t that just cause more of a thrill to run down Tony’s spine than he really wanted to think about.

The god leaned down and tucked his head behind Tony’s, so again neither of the two SHIELD agents could read his lips. Cheek to cheek he whispered in the billionaire’s ear. “Somehow I don’t think they are going to leave us alone. Perhaps we need to make an exit plan... And perhaps a bit of something to ruin their evening like they are ruining ours.”

Tony rolled an eye at a horrified Clint. Smirking he lowered the pitch of his voice, “And?” He purred low and throaty leaning into the conversation. Mostly to give Fury a heart attack when he heard about it, but partly because the shapely neck in front of him was just so temptingly. What he wouldn’t give to nuzzle that.

And so Mister Wizard shared his plan. Since it did not involve subjugating the earth or killing Clint and Natasha, Tony told him to go for it and let him out of the booth. “Ah ah ah.” He scolded Natasha when she started to get up.

“Tony.” Natasha hissed rolling her eyes in the direction that Loki had gone.

“What? Like anything is going to happen to him while we’re in a bar full of Fury’s flying monkeys.” His gaze turned icy. “But it goes without saying that *nothing* better happen to him because he’s in a bar full of Fury’s flying monkeys. You might want to make sure of that Nat. I would be upset if it did.”

“Jesus, Stark. What the fuck is up with you? This is Loki for crying out loud.”

“You’re right, Clint. This is Loki.”

And who exactly had final word on what happens to Loki? Oh yeah, that would be him.

Clint pulled a face. “Stark are you getting your rocks off having a pet god?”

“Maybe. The fact is, while Reindeer Games is on earth he’s mine. And as I have told you before, nobody messes with my stuff.”

His expression one of disgust, Clint groaned. “For you to be this crazy, you gotta be banging him. Dude, first rule... Never stick your dick in crazy.”

Tony made a face and rolled his eyes. “Cute, Clint. Really cute. And classy. Never let it be said you aren’t classy.”

Loki had stopped to talk to the blonde that Tony had been sitting with earlier. He threw a saucy smile back towards the group at the table and then leaned into her, murmuring into her hair while keeping his eyes locked on Tony who couldn’t help the ridiculous grin that spread across his face. The blonde also watched Tony, while listening closely to Loki.

Seeing her nod to Loki, Tony waved and motioned her over, patting the booth beside him as Loki headed towards the main bar.

“Tony, where’s he going?” Natasha asked tensely, poised to go after him.

“Chill ‘Tasha. I know exactly what he’s doing.” He smirked up at the Blonde, “Hey babe. Thanks for waiting.”

Natasha’s voice was sharp. “Tony we still have things to discuss.” She nodded towards the blonde. “Privately.”

“Are you sure we’re not done for the night?” He asked with a smirk. “Sweetheart, this is Clint and Natasha, why don’t you introduce yourself to them.”

OoooO

Making sure to give a wide berth to the men who were obviously allied with the assassin, Loki headed towards the bar. He had during the course of the evening exchanged glances and the occasional word with several lovely ladies who had wandered over to chat and decided to see if he could persuade his first choice that a private party with him might be more attractive than few more hours at the bar.

Personally, Loki would have loved to have stayed here a while. It had been a long time since he’d been able to socialize with so many people who expected absolutely nothing from him. And he frankly couldn’t remember the last time his skill with knives had translated into a socially acceptable activity. But perhaps best of all was the absolute glee that Stark exhibited as they collaborated on fleecing the unwary. Loki had been very impressed with the line of seemingly foolish patter Stark used to disarm and goad their chosen victims.

He smiled warmly at the petite chocolate haired woman he was approaching. Catching her eye, Loki was pleased to see her blush and bite her lip a second before looking down. She apparently decided that her drink was worthy of detailed study. Sidling up to her, Loki chatted for a few minutes before complimenting the large accent pin she was wearing. It was unusual and drew attention to the lovely expanse of skin exposed by her off the shoulder burnt orange blouse.

Since he had actually liked the jewelry, Loki had no problem being impressed that she had made it herself. Steam Punk was the style she informed him. While it obviously wasn’t the fine jewelry Loki was accustomed to seeing on Asgard, custom made by skilled craftsmen. The broach was still a lively, chaotic, eye catching piece that had been cleverly made with broken scraps that Faith, the brunette, had scavenged. Loki appreciated cleverness, the ability to think beyond the usual and the

skill to take what was at hand and fashion it into something you wanted. Of course he also appreciated the woman's profile, smile and of course the delicate bone structure that her cowl blouse showcased.

After a few minutes of letting her appreciate *his* smile, Loki pointed out his companions and broached his idea for continuing the evening at a very private party.

"Your friend looks a bit like Tony Stark doesn't he?" "She asked while collecting her purse and sliding off the bar stool she had been so delectably perched upon. Loki grinned, rolling his eyes theatrically.

"Oh please don't tell him that. He'll be more insufferable than he usually is. He is always trying to convince people he is a dead ringer for the man."

So of course the first thing that Stark did was introduce himself. "Hi. I'm Tony Stark, this is... Amy... Right? And these two who were just leaving are--" He peered up at them, obviously confused at the amused look he was getting from the petite brunette. Laughing she looked up at Loki who was nestled in behind her.

"I told you." Loki said smiling down at her, "He's tries all the time."

"Tries what, Lo?"

"I told Faith that even though you look nothing like the man, you are always trying to convince people you are Tony Stark.

Loki would be lying if he said he didn't enjoy the SHIELD agent choking on his drink, or the astonished look on Stark's face.

"Oh you bastard, it is so on." Stark said appreciatively, eyes lighting up in amusement. "You know you could just go along with me and at least pretend. It takes so little to make me happy."

"Stark, what are you talking about?" Barton asked hoarsely, pouring a few inches of beer from one of the pitchers into his glass.

"See, Clint is willing to play along."

Ignoring the unamused look that Natasha was giving him, Loki smiled at the short inventor before dramatically rolling his eyes and sighing. "Fine, if it's that important to you, '*Stark*', I'll play along."

"Speaking of playing along..." Loki turned a beautifully evil grin on the two agents. "You know, you two interrupted our dart game, but I think if we played one more round we might be persuaded to call it a night without any excitement or drama. What do you say... Barton. You and me, one last game, we'll even leave the bet the same amount as we were playing for when you arrived."

"If you think--" Barton protested only to be interrupted by Natasha.

"Win or lose one last game?" Natasha she asked.

Tightening his arms around the small woman in front of him Loki tossed her a lazy smile. "Correct. One last game. No matter who wins the bet, we'll leave."

"How much of a bet?" Natasha asked, obviously not pleased with either of them, but willing to go along just to get them moving without a scene.

“Ah. What was the last bet we made Stark?”

“Six hundred dollars.” Stark said with a wide grin of his own. “Think you can handle that Bird Brain?”

“If you think I’m--”

“Win or lose you’ll leave immediately?”

“Sure Nat, no problem.” Stark said with a shrug.

Five minutes later, a very disgusted Barton was stuffing a wad of money at Stark. “Four-twenty. It’s all I have on me.”

“Seriously Clint? This is all you have? They certainly don’t pay you very well do they?”

“Fuck you, Stark.”

“You wish you were my type Tweety.”

“I’ll bring the rest to you personally tomorrow.” The assassin said coolly interrupting them before their comments could escalate further. “Now I believe you two were leaving?”

Loki watched Natasha motion to the other agents as she and Barton prepared to follow them out. He also saw her snicker when Faith came out of a discussion with the blonde and smacked him hard on the arm exclaiming, “That is too Tony Stark!”

OoooO

Over the course of the next few weeks Loki had seen the two SHIELD several times and even the Agent named Coulson once. But if Stark didn’t care about them, then he didn’t have to either. Stark also told him he didn’t care where he went or who he talked to while they were out as long as he didn’t wander far enough to do more than trigger a warning tingle on his cuff. Which wasn’t strictly true. While indeed Stark didn’t normally care who he spoke with, there had been that one exception.

Perhaps three weeks after they had started ‘hitting the nightlife’, a blonde woman with a pixie cut who was sitting with them noticed and excitedly called out to an acquaintance of hers. It was then that Loki got to see a completely different side of Stark. The man the blonde called over was a fashion model, a foreigner to Stark’s country. He had light brown eyes with flecks of jade, underneath well-defined brows. His medium brown hair was straight and dipped just below his shoulder blades and he wore a close cropped beard that showcased his shapely jaw, chin and cheekbones. While being introduced to the mortal, the man had complimented Loki on the suit he was wearing in a mixture of English and his native tongue. The model’s eyes had lit up when Loki had answered him in his own language.

At the blonde’s urging, ‘*Theo*’ joined them for a drink. Over the course of the next half hour the man joined the conversation, occasionally struggling to understand the rapid fire comments. However with Loki occasionally translating the colloquial meanings for him, he followed along fairly well. Not that Loki understood everything himself, but thanks to his All Speak gift, extensive reading and several months of explanations during Stark’s movie nights he understood many more of them than the model did. During one whispered explanation Theo’s startled laughter rang out causing the other conversation at their table to stop. Theo threw an arm around Loki’s shoulders, pulled him over and started a rapid-fire conversation in Greek with Loki, asking him to translate it for the rest of the table. The man’s eyes were alight with amusement and the story of the insane

demands of a photographer he had once worked with were too absurd for Loki to immediately translate in his semi-inebriated state.

Loki was still laughing when he turned away from those arresting eyes and observed that Stark's mood had turned sour. Not that a casual observer would have necessarily seen it, but Loki easily noticed that the smile pasted on the engineer's face no longer reached his eyes. While Stark wasn't totally rude, shortly afterwards he abruptly declared that he had some early morning tests coming up and they needed to leave.

Stark didn't actually say the words 'now' or 'alone,' but his body language did it for him. Theo smiled ruefully and withdrew his arm apologizing to Loki in a low whispered Greek for upsetting his *'friend'*. The model's meaning so clear that Loki would have blushed if he hadn't already pulled on his mask and made a conscious effort to relax.

Stark pretended not to see the eye roll Loki did while they were making their way out of the club. Once at the curb Stark, didn't even wait to call his driver; he just hailed a cab and they had a silent, tense ride home. While nothing was said about the incident, Stark's mood was foul the next day and Loki resolved not to get too close to gorgeous looking men in the future. No matter how unintentional or innocent the encounter was on Loki's part. Loki interacted with others only through the grace of Stark's good will. And Stark's good will apparently only included his interaction with females.

OoooO

The day following the 'Theo' event Loki went up to the roof, kept his head down and worked on etching runes on another shipment of aluminum strips. He carefully spaced the protection rune three times on each strip. It would be highly unlikely that one rune would be defaced being installed so high. But with multiple identical copies of the rune on each twenty meter strip? That would not be possible for anything but deliberate sabotage and it would take damage to all three runes to negate the protection flowing down from each strip.

The white canopy flapping above and around him provided shade for Loki, weather protection for the drying sealant, privacy from passing news helicopters and if Loki had understood Stark correctly, meddlesome scrutiny from SHIELD. Ubiquitous surveillance apparently, which greatly annoyed Stark to the point that Loki wasn't allowed to leave its confines without Jarvis' approval.

The only part of his job that required complete concentration was the actual creation of the runes themselves. The rest of it, the masking, removal and sealing was fairly mindless and gave Loki a lot of time to think without being interrupted by Stark and Jarvis. Enough time that Loki was becoming an expert on what did and did not annoy Tony Stark. Not that his conclusions were all necessarily comforting. But Stark stomping around and pouting like a thwarted child was a useful reminder for him that comfortable was not necessarily something he should be around the mortal lest he do something to jeopardize his new found, but very conditional freedom.

It was much like being in Asgard where he constantly had to monitor the moods of Odin, Thor, the court and the Oafish Four if he wanted to stay out of trouble. But at least here he only had to keep track of Stark, Jarvis and those SHIELD agents that kept shadowing them. And yes, Jarvis had moods, and not surprisingly they often depended on the mood of his creator.

While carefully removing the masks from a batch of completed pieces, Loki went over the events of the last few weeks and how they might tie in with Stark's exhibition of jealousy last night. The mortal had been borderline possessive since his hospital stay but he thought that last night's behavior was more than was more than casual possessiveness.

Stark was almost like a youngling in that respect, possession was everything. Last night someone who challenged Stark had dared to touch something the engineer perceived as his. And Stark had reacted like a badly socialized toddler. The mortal obviously believed whatever he wanted was his once he had his hands upon it. So in his mind, someone else laying hands upon an item might mean ownership would transfer. Not particularly mature, but doubtless a subconscious behavior. Loki wondered if Stark's parents had used removal or withholding favored possessions as a punishment when the man was young. Or perhaps it was just that as a single child he had not learned that sharing did not necessarily mean transfer of ownership.

Loki also spent a lot of time thinking about Stark's overall dismissal of female affection as a threat and what that might say about how the mortal subconsciously did not seem to have a very high regard for females in general.

That the man was starved for true affection was obvious. Stark had been devastated when he and Ms. Potts had separated. While Stark obviously liked Doctor Banner, the man was not around often enough to fill the void left by Ms. Potts. Also, Loki thought that Stark wanted or rather craved his affection to include copious amounts of physical contact. He would be willing to bet that exclusivity on his partner's part was also something Stark required to be happy. It was fairly apparent that he demanded to be the center of his companion's attention. The mortal had certainly not appreciated Ms. Potts being distracted with company concerns, nor Doctor Banner's dedication to charity work when he wasn't lost in his own research.

Done with removal of the rubberized sheet masks, Loki began cleaning away any traces of left over adhesive, the last step that needing to be done before he could install and then activate the etched metal. Afterwards, sealing the surface could be done by anyone.

Hands busy, Loki's mind continued to roam. If his understanding of Stark's behavior issues had highlighted uncomfortable parallels that he also sometimes exhibited... Well Loki was determined not to dwell on that. He comforted himself that he at least did not disparage the value of feminine affection.

OoooO

Later that evening, Loki was standing up at the bar speaking with a few of the ladies there, trying to decide which, if any, he wanted to invite back to their table when his cuff started to tingle.

He swore under his breath, looking around wildly, searching for where Stark might have gone.

"Is something wrong?" One of the women asked alarmed as he backed away from the bar. Frantically pushing through the crowd he hurried to get back to the booth where he had let Stark perhaps a half an hour ago. Obviously the man wasn't there and even with his height Loki couldn't spot him anywhere. He hoped that someone was left at their table who would know where the engineer was headed. Loki hadn't quite made it to their booth when his body became as stiff as a board. He felt the control of his body movements leave him, but he could see and hear just fine. He was fully aware, for instance, that a few of the people he was near were aware there was a problem. "Get Stark." He tried to tell them, but since they didn't react at all, he wasn't sure the words in his brain were actually making it past his lips. He was totally rigid but it felt like Thor had called down multiple bolts of lightning upon him. A single moment seemed to last an eternity.

And then it abruptly stopped.

"Fuck the Norns!" He screamed falling forward completely unable to remain standing. A bystander grabbed for him, he was not able to hold on, but his grip did prevent him from landing face first against the hard polished cement floor.

“Stark! Call Tony Stark! Tell hi--” Loki scrabbled on the floor, all dignity lost. Now his only goal was to get his arms and legs to lift to respond so he could go look for Stark. He had only just made it onto his knees when another searing shock again robbed him of all motor control. Having experienced it once, this time it seemingly redoubled, holding him immobile on his hands and knees as the pain pounded through his nervous system. Tears formed in corners of his eyes. The pain was like Mjölnir beating against his spine as fast as if some giant monstrous hummingbird wielded the electrified hammer. Again as the pain left him he collapsed like a puppet whose strings had been cut.

“Stark! Stark!” He screamed collapsing forward striking his forehead hard on the tile floor. Other pains in his shoulder and wrist brought themselves forcefully to his attention. He had blood trickling down from his forehead. In the back of his mind he was aware of the crowd that had formed around him. Someone who looked vaguely familiar was wiping the blood from his face and tugging on his arm, but frankly if he was going to fall again he would just as soon stay on the floor. However, at the man’s insistence he did consent to roll over. But the only other thing he did was to painfully gather enough breath to scream for Stark once more before the next pain hit him.

OoooO

Tony was reverently running his hands over a shiny 1957 Mercedes-Benz 300SL Gullwing when his phone started ringing. It was one of Jarvis’ emergency rings. The new one dedicated to problems with his little Nordic ball of joy.

Why would--?

Holy Fuck!

Loki!

“Shit! Sorry man gotta go!” Without another word to the car’s owner Tony tore back towards the club, pushing past the two bouncers at the door who had also been enjoyably eyeballing the car. His phone kept ringing, but Tony knew what the problem was. Loki hadn’t tried to run off. Instead Tony had been the one to get too far away. The Mercedes-Benz owner had noticed him sitting in the club and had wandered over to chat with him. Now normally Tony could care less about talking to chance met strangers in clubs unless he was the one to initiate the conversation. However a GullWing Benz in perfect condition was a conversational gambit that he couldn’t resist. And like the stupid half-drunk fuck that he was, he had totally forgotten about his wingman!

And just when he didn’t think it could get any worse, Tony found a SHIELD agent with Loki, trying to move him. He was glad to see that other than being somewhat battered and sprawled out on the floor, Loki seemed not to be too badly hurt. Actually, he was trying to bat the SHIELD agent’s hands away, while screaming for Tony.

“Lo! Lo! I’m here, it’s okay.” Tony bent down to capture Loki’s hands before he could do any damage to the agent. “Shhhhh, I’m here. Totally my fault buddy, I’m sorry. Eyes narrowed he looked up at the crowd surrounding the god and growled. “Shows over assholes, he had a seizure, thanks for helping. Now go piss off somewhere, will ya?”

“Mister Stark, let me help you with him.” The Agent said quietly. “He may have taken a nasty blow to the head when he fell; he needs to be checked for a concussion.”

“Stark?” Wide eyed Loki stared up at him, trying to sit up but apparently having difficulties getting his limbs to obey him.

Tony humped. A medical check in a SHIELD medical facility no doubt. Like Tony was going to allow that to happen. Tony sank to his knees gathering Loki up against him. Shifting a bit, Tony pulled his still ringing phone out and swiped his thumb across it and then lifted it to his mouth. “Jarvis, I got it. It was a misunderstanding. It’s okay now.”

What the hell had he been thinking? How many times had Loki been shocked because he was a dumb fuck who couldn’t even remember that he himself had decided to clamp the equivalent of a stun gun on the god’s ankle? And not just any stun gun. Oh hell no. He had personally designed a super-duper Stark improved stun gun. With a better battery life than the ones Natasha carried. And Tony had been proud that he improved the design, now just thinking about it was making him sick.

“Sir, are you sure?” the AI asked.

“Yeah, Jay, I am. Actually it was my fault. Look, call my driver and get him to the front door pronto. And then call Bruce and see if he is in available, if not call Vaseling. Tell him Lo may have a possible concussion and I’m bringing him right home.”

“Immediately sir. Also Director Fury is trying to reach you; he said it was urgent and concerned Mister Odinson. He seemed quite upset and was using very intemperate language.”

I bet he was thought Tony sourly, mentally adding an unavoidable meeting with the SHIELD director to his list of imminent problems that needed to be solved.

“Tell him I’m busy and I’ll get with him later, Jarvis.” Tony said tapping a thumb on his phone to disconnect before shoving it back in his pocket. Tony closed his eyes and rested his head on Loki’s.

“Mister Stark, we need to get out of here now.” The nameless SHIELD agent crouched down talking to Tony in a low enough voice to avoid being overheard. “Let me give you a hand there.”

Tony opened his eyes just in time to see the man reach over towards Loki. Panic and despair gave way to a surge of rage that caught even him off guard. He whipped his head sideways, glaring. His look daring the agent to move his hand one more inch closer. “Don’t you dare.” He growled menacingly through clenched teeth. “I will make your life a living hell if you lay even *one* fucking finger on him.”

The man’s eyes widened, but he did slowly retract his hand. “Then let me help *you* up Mister Stark.” He put an arm under Tony’s and slowly encouraged him to stand.

Leaning against the agent, Tony got both him and mildly protesting Loki on their feet. Although neither one of them was very steady. As if he didn’t have enough to worry about with Fury wanting to talk to his ass, Tony was also well aware of how many surreptitious photos had been taken of him kneeling on the floor with his arms wrapped around a lap full of long legged Norse god. Tony Stark? On the floor of a night club with a death grip on a hot looking guy with killer cheek bones? Fucking twitter gold right there. The seizure story would be published in most of the established papers... Because as much money as they would make if they ran the pictures without mentioning the medical cover story, the rags knew his lawyers would be more than happy to sue them for all of that plus much, much more.

The bloggers however would be having a field day. Tony *could* unleash Jarvis and his lawyers on them and have a bunch of cease and desist notices sent. But as he and Loki shakily made their way out of the club, he decided to let Pepper decide if that was necessary.

Personally, he didn't give a fuck.

Loki kept trying to tell him he was fine and asking him what the hell happened.

"Shhhh. I know you're fine, Lo. Let me get you out of here and we can talk in private. Okay? Just a few minutes please."

The bouncer brought out a chair for Loki to sit on while they waited for his car to arrive. About ten minutes later he did have to snarl one more time at the SHIELD agent as Tony's only slightly stretched Lincoln Town car pulled up to the curb. But fortunately for the agent he immediately backed up and let Tony help Loki into the back seat by himself. The minute they were in the car, he told his driver Jeff to get them to the tower and slapped the privacy switch to cut off the outgoing mic.

A mostly recovered Loki tossed a glance towards the lit up privacy light on the privacy control panel between them and the driver. "Now?"

Tony nodded but didn't say anything. Honestly what could he say? He'd been a total dick and this was all his fault. While he was not looking forward to it, Tony was perfectly prepared to get his ass handed to him by an irate god. He was not prepared for the almost whispered, raspy comment he did receive.

"Stark, I did not initiate what happened last night."

Huh?

What the hell did that have to—

Tony felt a hot wave of embarrassment roll over him. Didn't he totally deserve that? To have Loki think he was a vindictive prick who would allow someone to have the shit shocked out of them because he was jealous. "No. Honestly. Just...No."

"Whatever you may think of me, Stark...And I know it's not much, I would not repay your indulgences like that."

Tony scrubbed his face with the palms of his hands, dropping them down between his thighs as he let his head fall back. "Lo," He said tiredly, talking to the headliner, "this has nothing to do with last night. Ya know what? Let's just forget last night happened okay?" His eyes slid sideways, Loki was leaning up against the door watching him guardedly. "This was one hundred percent me just being an unthinking idiot." Impulsively, wanting to do *something* to make that wary expression to go away, Tony wrapped his arm around Loki's and leaned over, laying his head against the god's shoulder as he proceeded to tell him about going to see the car.

"Oh."

That was it. Loki didn't yell him. Or try and make Tony feel like more of a shit than he already did. He just said 'oh'.

And shake his arm loose from Tony's grip.

Which Tony figured he pretty much deserved. Before he could move back to his own side of the car, Loki surprisingly wrapped his arm around Tony's shoulder pulling him in so Loki could whisper in his ear. "Everyone makes mistakes, Stark. Don't worry about it."

Almost afraid to breathe, Tony just sagged into the embrace, enjoying the sound of Loki's heart

beat underneath his ear, listening to it as it wound down from a high pitched whirr to a slow steady beat. It had time for that at least since the traffic was horrible this evening and it was taking forever just to get out of the entertainment district.

Maybe a half hour later Tony was drifting in that half relaxed state you get before really falling asleep, vaguely aware that the car had stopped and someone had opened the door.

Nuh huh

Tony nuzzled his cheek against the smooth fabric of Loki's shirt, feeling the heat of the god's body through the thin material.

"Stark," Loki murmured into his hair, "we're back at the tower. Can you wake up a bit for me?"

The only thing Tony wanted to do right now was cry if he had to move. He was safe, comfortable, warm and he wanted nothing more than to stay right where he was for the rest of the night.

But he couldn't. Even though he was dead tired, he was Tony Fucking Stark and he had to get up and go fight with Fury.

Chapter End Notes

If you are curious as to what Theo looks like this is him. I wanted to have a picture when I wrote that scene so I googled gorgeous men and this gentleman's picture was posted multiple times under that heading.

<https://twinphoenix222.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/theo-theodoridis-greek-male-model.jpg>

Oh... And as you may of noticed Loki definitely prefers brunettes. Wonder why? :)

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful ReindeerGames19. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Bet you can't teach me.

Chapter Summary

Tony is pleasantly surprised when he wakes up. His employees? Not so happy.

Chapter Notes

Wonderful comment. Thank you so much! You guys Rock!

This chapter isn't a steak dinner, it more like soup. Not as satisfying as the steak but good for you and loaded with vitamins... I mean background. Having said that... The chapter beginning is like the best appetizer platter I've ever ordered... err... Written. I had a blast with it. I hope you enjoy it.

Also please see the question at the bottom, your feedback will help make QG2 at better Story.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 42 Bet you can't teach me.

Tony's first thought upon crawling up from a sound sleep was that he hadn't felt so rested in months. His second was that something was wrong. Not necessarily bad wrong, but different wrong. For one thing his pillow had a heartbeat.

Okay. So maybe that happened fairly often. But when it did happen, it was much softer than this.

Okay...

Tony seldom took the risk of bringing men home to his tower, there was too much of a chance of someone snapping pictures of them coming or going and leaking them to the press. Not that he cared.

Much...

But that was one of the few aspects of his life that he was discreet about and not just because it saved him a world of grief from Pepper and her PR people. Although it did. It was more having to do with his somewhat justifiable paranoia. If he didn't bring them to his place, he wasn't spending the night with them. There was almost no place he considered safe enough to sleep without Jarvis watching over him. Besides, his security recordings had warded off numerous lawsuits and blackmail attempts over the years, and those just from the women he slept with.

Which begs the question of why he was draped across some guy and using his chest as a pillow? Without moving, Tony cracked one eye open. Okay, why was he in a car? Who the hell sleeps in a car? Okay, so he had several times, but usually when he did he'd woken up slumped painfully over the steering wheel, not cuddled in the back seat.

So... This was his car... He remembered that now. This meant the thighs he was between and the strong arms wrapped around him belonged to Loki. Tony snorted mentally. He's had this dream a time or two... So either he is still dreaming... Or his charming personality has finally won the tall bastard over.

Tony decides he is going to have to go with dreaming, because he is wearing way too many clothes for the whole winning over thing to have occurred.

"Sir? Are you awake?" Jarvis asked quietly.

"Maybe. Jarvis why am I sleeping in the back seat of my own town car using a Nordic god as my pillow?" Tony asked, his voice somewhat muffled because he doesn't want to move just yet from the chest he's snuggled up against.

Even if it isn't wearing that sinfully soft sweater he likes so much.

"You refused to leave the car last night. Mister Odinson had the driver call me on the car phone. He offered to stay with you until you woke up, so I dismissed the driver and kept watch of the garage using the security cameras for exterior visuals and the open phone line to listen in with."

"Okaaaaaay..."

"I also canceled your call to Doctor Vaslin, told Director Fury you would be unavailable until morning and locked the area down. I am afraid Director Fury has become increasingly upset. He has already called twice this morning and requested that you, 'Get your ass out of bed right now!'" Agents Coulson and Romanoff have been waiting down in the lobby for almost an hour to mediate a video conference between the two of you.

Somewhere up above him, Tony heard a sleepy sigh and one of the warm arms wrapped around him moved. He felt fingers lightly combing his hair for a moment, before a chin brushed a few times against the top of his head. Unable to help himself, Tony lifted his head a bit and looked up at Loki. The god's hand was across his face and he was rubbing the sleep out of his eyes with his fingertips and the ball of his thumb.

Tony huffed and moved his hand from where was tucked underneath Loki and reached up to tap two fingers on the shapely chin that had only moments ago been pressing down on him.

"Morning gorgeous," Tony said smiling.

OoooO

Tony knew that making Coulson and his shadow Natasha wait a minute longer than was actually necessary was not the way to insure a longer, happier life. So Tony and Loki, in all their rumpled finery, immediately went to the conference level of the tower. Jarvis with his normal efficiency had made sure there was hot coffee and cold drinks on the table before Tony had even stepped into the elevator to come up here.

After grabbing a cup of coffee, Tony sat at the head of the table. He waved Loki towards the seat to the right of him and plunked a bottle of water in front of him. A few minutes later, two SI security guards delivered Tony's portable suit and took up positions on either side of the open door. Then he and Loki both sat there shaking off the last wisps of sleep, with Loki doing a few rolls of his shoulders to loosen them and stretching his back as well as he could while sitting in a plush conference room chair.

"While comfortable to sit in, your car leaves something to be desired as a bed Stark." The god said

his tone not really that of a complaint, but more of someone making an observation.”

“I’ll talk to Pepper about adding a few matching pillows for lower back support.” Tony said before adding with a sly smile, “But I have to say I was very comfortable.”

“That’s because you weren’t on the bottom.”

Tony’s grin became gleeful and he had just opened his mouth to tell Loki that he was open to negotiation on position, when Coulson strolled in the door followed by the Russian Menace.

It was impossible to tell if Coulson was pissed at him. The guy’s expression was his patented very mildly amused look. Now Natasha, she was a bit easier to read, if only because she wanted Tony to see how pissed off she was.

“Yo. Red! I’m the one who should be all frowny. Your bet welshing ass was supposed to be here yesterday. Pay up dead beat.”

Sourly she pulled a wad of bills out of her jacket pocket and tossed them down on the table. Coulson sat down on Tony’s left side with his back towards the door, Natasha started to walk around the table to flank him but stopped cold when Tony called her on it.

“Oh no ‘Tasha. You go right back there and sit by Agent like a good girl.” He ignored her twisted look of distaste, allowing it to roll right off of him. “Guys! Close the door please,” Tony called to the two security guards. “Thanks. I’ll call if I want you.”

Sweeping the money over to Loki, Tony smiled pleasantly and asked, “So... To what do I owe the honor of this little visit?” He took a sip of his coffee and inclined his mug towards Natasha, “Assuming of course you didn’t just tag-a-long for the ride with Red here while she made good on her bet.”

“Hello Stark. Good morning Loki.”

Loki tilted his head, looking for all the world like a kitten coming across a neatly wrapped ball of yarn sitting on the floor. He had that puzzled ‘why is this here?’ yet wickedly delighted ‘if they didn’t want me to touch it they shouldn’t have left it on the floor’ look. The kind of look that occurred two seconds before the entire room became webbed with yarn. Said kitten relying of course on his inherent adorable hotness to prevent any real punishment. While he enjoyed the interplay of expressions that flashed across Loki’s face, Tony had a fleeting thought that he perhaps should send one of the guards for a squirt bottle full of water. Just in case the godling got too rambunctious.

Loki, water, thin cotton dress shirts...

“You okay Tony?” Natasha asked as he choked on a sip of coffee, turning red for a moment until he could catch his breath.

Mental images were a bitch!

Well and hot of course! But when you had ol’ super spy and her boss sitting across from you... That was perhaps not something Tony should indulge in at this time. But still...

“Fine, fine.” He said waving a hand and trying another sip of coffee to clear his throat. Loki turned his attention back to the SHIELD agents.

“Good morning Agent Coulson, Agent Romanoff.” Loki folded up the wad of bills, “Thank you

for bringing this,” he said sticking the money in the side pocket of his pants.

Coulson studied the god for an instant before asking, “And how are you feeling this morning? You had quite a shock last night didn’t you?”

“It was an accident Agent Coulson and I am fine this morning.” If his smile had more than a hint of a smirk in it, it was still polite enough. “Thank you so much for your concern.”

“Uh huh.” Coulson very deliberately took in the rumpled state of their clothes and then asked pleasantly, “So... Stark. You want to tell me what happened?”

“Not really. Like he said, it was an accident. It won’t happen again.”

Raising a brow at that statement Coulson asked genially, “So you intend to keep doing this? Taking your prisoner out in public?”

“I have followed all the rules laid down for me Agent Coulson, so I don’t see what the problem is.” Loki said evenly. While his face was as impassive as his words, the flash in his green eyes was cold, bitter and razor sharp. He was clearly not happy with Colson trying to interfere with his activities.

“Really? Do you mind if I ask what rules those were?”

Before Tony could answer Loki did, with a nasty Cheshire cat smile. “Of course not.” He said, pausing a moment to tap his lips pensively with his index finger. “Let’s see... I have to stay close enough to Stark so that my restraint cuff won’t be activated.”

He smirked over at Tony who rolled his eyes and made a face at him.

“I have to use mortal means of contraception so Stark doesn’t have to inform Queen Frigga that she has become the grandmother of a half-breed.” Natasha’s brows raised microscopically in stifled astonishment.

“And also so I don’t pick up any nasty mortal illnesses. I need to make my way quietly to the lab if my ‘guest’ doesn’t leave before I wake up so that Jarvis can deal with her.” Natasha’s lips thinned. “Oh, and I can’t tell anyone who I really am.” He studied his nails a moment before winking at Coulson and giving him a wide cheeky smile.

Coulson looked nonplused. He and Natasha shared a long information flowing look, before looked back over at Tony. “Why Stark?”

“Well I think Odin would bust a ‘roid if this one’s casual encounters started popping out illegitimate Earthgardian half-breeds.”

In her voice of extremely limited patience Natasha retorted, “Cut the crap Stark, why are you taking your prisoner to bars and dance clubs.”

“Jeez Nat. What part of work release do you people not understand? He works for me; he gets to hang out in bars as his release.” Tony let the irritation bleed from his voice, continuing in more of a sprightly tone he knew would aggravate the super spy to no end. “Besides, it really has helped his post injury depression. He hasn’t had a real episode since we started going out a couple of nights a week.” He exchanged smirks with Loki a moment before they both returned their attention to the exasperated agents.

“Uh huh. Work release? What kind of work?” Coulson asked with a raised brow.

“Ummm, private project Mr. Nosey.”

Coulson’s other brow rose so the agent now had a matched pair.

“Really?” He said allowing just a touch of *‘please tell me this isn’t happening’* to color his voice.

“Not that kind of private you Home Land Defense perv.” Tony sniped. “Anyway, aren’t you here as Pirate Bill’s proxy? Where is the leather wearing SOB anyhow?”

“I’m afraid that’s pri--”

“Jarv? Where is the One Eyed Leather Fetish King?”

“Stark that classified information and really doesn’t pertain to thi--”

“Sir, Director Fury is on the heli-carrier which is presently in the Bering Sea, twenty three miles from Newtok, Alaska. They are not currently air borne.”

“Thank Jarvis. Hey, get the Patron Saint of Anger Management Issues on the screen will you? Tell him I’m only going to be available for the next twenty minutes max.”

“Very good sir.”

“Coffee?” Tony gestured towards the tray in the center of the table inviting the Coulson and Natasha to help themselves.

OoooO

It only took a minute or two to get Fury on the conference screen. The director did not look happy. Not that it was any surprise to Tony. In fact when the day came that Fury did look happy, that was going to be the day that Tony started to panic. He started by hashing over the same crap that Coulson had fussed about until Tony had asked Jarvis how much of his twenty minutes was left.

Basically Fury was well aware of what happened and wanted to hand Tony his ass for endangering the general population by putting Loki in a position where he might attack civilians directly. Or endanger them by way of Asgard retribution if Loki got himself injured and, or killed on Earth. Like from an overly powerful taser cuff. Tony tried to look contrite, but truth be told, he was having a hard time drumming up anything but a smug smile. He certainly didn’t intend to cause Loki any pain, but the evening had ended up with them sleeping together so it was impossible for Tony to feel too bad about it. Besides, if Loki wasn’t pissed about it then Fury certainly shouldn’t be.

But of course he was. However Fury didn’t get to say what he really wanted to, because Tony refused to send Loki out of the room even when Fury came out and requested it. So it came down to the Director of SHIELD telling Tony that he was absolutely not to take his ‘prisoner’ out in public again.

Yeah. Like Tony was going to risk Loki having too much time on his hands and being all depressed again. The Asgardian had fucking bloomed when they started hitting bars and clubs a couple of nights a week. Besides, it also kept Tony occupied and there was no way he was going back to being bored in the evenings.

That was so not going to happen.

“Coulson?” Fury said.

Folding his hands in front of him on the table, Coulson nodded to Fury before addressing the god. “Loki, the other day you mentioned to Natasha that you had no idea why you were here.” Loki nodded in agreement. “You said that you might have received this as punishment for reasons that ranged from merely being annoying to treason. That seems a bit farfetched doesn’t it?” He asked studying the god closely as he spoke.

A statement which Tony kind of had to agree with. “That does cover a pretty wide swath of ground there Rudolf. You sure you can’t narrow it down any more than that?”

“Sadly no. It could be something very minor like missing one too many official feasts or it could be almost triggering Ragnarök, I can’t be sure. Odin can be quite unreasonable over the mildest of transgressions if he learns of the transgression while having an already bad day. He is particularly intolerant when the transgressor is a prince of the realm. I once spent a week in the palace dungeons as a youngling for trying to hang a banner of my colors from the highest spire of the palace.”

“A dungeon? With other prisoners?” Tony’s stomach did a little flip.

Loki nodded, “Well not in the same cell of course. They cleared the other prisoners out of my cell and temporarily packed them into one of the adjoining cells. Not even Odin would have put me in cell with adult criminals.” He smiled genially. “Mother would have killed him.”

“Of course,” Tony agreed. He wasn’t sure if this tid-bit of parental concern and royal Asgardian family dynamics comforted him or horrified him.

“Really? Simply because you were up on the roof?” Coulson asked.

“Yes. Some stupid servant caught a glimpse of me crawling up the roof ridge and sounded the alarm. My lady mother rushed to a facing balcony and fainted when she saw me.”

“Fainted?” Even Romanoff was now interested; she knew how well Thor bounced when he fell. “How high off the ground were you?”

Loki’s smile was one of reminiscing on the foolishness of youth.” Not quite as high up as Stark Tower’s roof... But close. I was fairly annoyed when father sent a sky boat for me. I had managed to liberate an entire bolt of material that had been reserved to make festival garb for my attendants. Emerald Spider silk from Vanir, marvelously light stuff, my color would have floated in the smallest of breezes.”

The mortals at the table all looked at each other for a minute, each of them pondering what they would do if a kid of theirs had climbed out on a roof a hundred stories in the air. Except for Loki whose slightly dissatisfied look indicated that he was dwelling more on the fact that a really good prank had been ruined due to parental squeamishness and a servant who couldn’t keep his mouth shut.

“So, Loki.” Fury fixed his one good eye on the younger god. “Stark tells us you intend to publish more books. The main reason I called this meeting was to inform you that SHIELD will have to see and approve them before you release them to the general public.”

Oh no he didn’t! However as fast as he was, before Tony could jump Fury’s ass, Loki began shutting him down.

“No, I don’t think so,” The god said with an impish grin. “You certainly have no legal rights to do so. Nothing I am publishing is prohibited information or proprietary property of your realm, let

alone your country.” Just before the veins in Fury’s forehead could explode, Loki held a finger up to his lips and continued. “I will however, of my own freewill, offer you a contract that allows you to examine each book three days before it is published. Upon payment of an agreed upon fee of course. And solely to be accommodating, I will even allow you an option to pay an additional fee to delay publishing of any manuscript in forty day increments.” Both brows raised in amusement, Loki’s head tilted as he gave Fury a little one sided smile. “Now where are you going to find a better deal than that?”

And didn’t that go down well, Tony thought. Coulson looked mulish, Red looked murderous and Fury looked like he was going to have a stroke.

“Well I might just hack the damn things and then delete them before you can publish them. How’s that for a better deal?” Fury’s snarl was just slightly louder than Tony’s. Only just.

Oh fuck no! Tony’s eyes narrowed dangerously.

Nobody. Absolutely nobody. Hacked Tony’s system. Let alone deleted files from it. He’d see SHIELD’s servers burn before that happened.

“Well you can certainly try deleting them, but you won’t be able to read them. Unless your skills at translating the languages of the nine realms are better than I think they are.” Smirking, Loki traced his lower lip with a criminally long, incredibly distracting finger. “I certainly didn’t write them in your English or any language from your realm even. In fact I didn’t write them in any one language at all, but rather in a wide range of languages written in a randomly chosen order.” Loki smiled sweetly at Fury. “I know for a fact that one of the languages, Vaneskay is so obscure that perhaps only six people can read it. And one of them has been missing for centuries.”

“So how do you intend to publish them if they aren’t written in a language that is spoken on this planet?”

“Communication is my one of my talents so to speak. As a final step, I will run through each work and translate it before publishing it. It won’t take long; a week at the very most. I can transcribe rather quickly. After all, I’ve had centuries to perfect that particular skill.”

And then it was all over but the shouting. Quite a lot of shouting in fact. While Fury was berating the god, Tony rummaged around in a small storage cabinet, locating a note pad and pen. He handed them to Loki who was seemingly only lending half an ear to the director’s rant. Accepting the writing implements with a smile, the mischief maker concentrated instead on writing down the main points of his offer along with prices before sliding the note pad across the table to Coulson.

Coulson looked at the god from under lowered brows, clearly not happy. Not that Tony gave a damn. He rapped on the table and excused the both of them. He’d had enough of Fury and his shit. Jarvis and the guards could see them out - he had better things to do today.

OoooO

Six hours after their meeting Coulson shot back a contract for Loki. Tony had been a bit miffed before he read it. After all he never really thought that SHIELD would actually even consider a deal with Prince Psychopath. And besides Tony was supposed to have first refusal and exclusive rights, but he calmed down after reading it when Jarvis pointed out that Loki’s agreement with SHIELD had nothing to do with the agreement the god had with Tony.

Tony got the chance to see Loki’s books before they were published. SHIELD only got to see them once they were ready for final publication. Or in other words after Tony had released them to be

published. The Trickster got two opportunities to be paid for not publishing and unlike SHIELD, Tony at least got to read a synopsis of each book to decide if he wanted exclusivity. SHIELD had to pay sight unseen for the right to look at any book ready for publication without even knowing the book's title. Fury had screamed a lot about that clause. However the clause that almost the most grief was that the initial SHIELD suppression fee was subject to monthly increases based on a formula that basically amounted to Loki's mood.

Fury had almost gone into orbit over that one.

Tony himself had found the whole process of Loki versus the lawyers of SHIELD vastly amusing. With Fury's reactions of course being worthy of permanent archive storage. Pepper had insisted that the head of Tony's legal counsel shadow Lorin's negotiations. He had been pretty impressed and only suggested minor changes in the wording, amazed that Loki had managed to manipulate SHIELD from a flat 'Hell No', to a 'Yes, yes, just sign the damn thing' in so short a period of time. Tony thought the 'Reply required within six hours' clause might have had something to do with that. Loki claimed he wasn't about to get into an extended negotiation, so SHIELD was required to sign or counter-offer within that time frame if they wanted to make a deal.

Before it was complete, the god had made six revisions, stream lining language and removing clauses before he was happy with it. SHIELD held the final draft of the contract until the last minute before caving in and signing it. Tony and Loki went out that evening to celebrate with Loki for once footing the tab. He used his signing bonus to pay for it. A clause he had stuck into the deal when Fury had gotten pissy with him.

OoooO

"Well Loki, according to Tony and Jarvis you seem to have pulled out of the worst of your depression." Bruce said looking over his glasses at the god sitting on the examining table. "What? Only three minor episodes in the last month?" He tapped on the tablet, "And your lactic acid levels are real good. I think a step down from this medicine is in order; I'll ask Tony to send my report up and request enough to let us do a gradual withdrawal. Would that be okay with you?"

While he was not nearly as skilled a healer as Eir, Loki did know enough that he actually agreed with Doctor Banner on a medical basis not just one of personal preference. "Will you be recommending that I wait before this step down is finished to start my classes?"

"Actually... No." At Loki's inquisitive look, Banner elaborated, "Hey, it keeps you occupied. While I don't really approve of Tony's preferred methods of recreation, I'm of the opinion that they have done as much if not more than the medicine to get you to this point." He smiled ruefully. "And your classes along with the projects you're working on with Tony would have the benefit of keeping you occupied with less alcohol. So that's a plus as far as I'm concerned."

Banner looked embarrassed. "So. Um... You and Tony getting along okay then?"

Loki, who had been looking down at the shirt buttons he was redoing froze a second. Mischievously bright green eyes slid sideways, taking in the uncomfortable man standing beside him. He knew he shouldn't do it, but honestly it was just too tempting. Loki took a deep breath, allowing a delicious shiver to become visible.

"Just fine thank you." He cooed as a tremulous yet sweet smile blossomed on his face. "Tony takes *excellent* care of me you know."

Doctor Banner blushed.

“Jarvis is anyone there yet?” Loki asked hurrying into the elevator smoothing a hand down his front. His black slim cut suit was complimented by a skinny black belt, a pale grey shirt and a black tie with an emerald and dull silver floral paisley print. He had his own large Stark tablet and Minion was carrying a stack of specially modified e-readers for use of the class. The no paper rule was starting to get on his nerves, but as yet he and Stark had not agreed on a way to end it. Hence the tablets.

“Yes sir. Ms. Johnson, one of the Stark International Training Facilitators, has been going over the security restrictions and class rules. They should be ready to start when you get there. You don’t need to hurry, you’ll be right on time,” Jarvis said soothingly.

And he was. Loki walked into the training room at exactly nine a.m. Initially his entrance was noted but then dismissed as unimportant, several of them obviously thinking he was a late attendee. But when he moved to the front of the room, trailed by a custom Stark Robot he came under renewed scrutiny. Very little of it favorable, no doubt due to his apparent age, since he looked younger than all but one of the attendees.

“Gentlemen, this is Mister Lorin Othinnson he has recently published a paper under the pseudonym of Simon Cole titled ‘Bose-Einstein Condensates in Relation to the Feynman Model’. He has agreed to conduct a series of exclusive training sessions for us at the personal bequest of Mister Stark.

His book had only just started to make inroads in the college set. And admittedly even there in the small subset of those engineering classes it would pertain to. So Loki was not surprised that no one in the room had heard of him before a royalty paid, thank you very much, copy of his paper had been sent to them last week. He was however surprised at some of the speculative looks he was getting from various members of the class when the Johnson woman mentioned that this class was a personal project of Stark.

Dubiously speculative?

Marvelous, he thought tartly.

The class security meant that all the participants’ cellphones were secured outside of the class room in metal lockers. It also meant that all the handouts were in electronic form on the StarkReader’s that Minion gave to Ms. Johnson to distribute. The first part of the morning session was spent registering the Starkpads to the attendees and introductions.

It was only after the first break that Loki actually spoke to the class about anything beyond introductions.

Loki called the class to order and flashed a class synopsis up on the display screen. “This is what we will be covering this week. If during the course of these classes you have questions in any areas please forward them to my inbox and I will see if they are items that we can go into on our last class day.” There were, Loki was pleased to note, a few attendees who seemed actually thrilled at the content that Loki was proposing to cover. A few were frankly bored and one or two seemed agitated... One to the point of hostility, much though he tried to hide it.

A wide smile grew on Loki’s face, but not as wide as the gleeful one he hid. “So... Before we begin, are there any questions?”

A floodgate opened.

“How many patents do you hold?” Asked the lesser of the two agitated men, a pale sandy hair man. Donnelly was his name Loki recalled.

“Sadly none, although I look forward to that changing very soon.”

The only youngster in the class asked him, “What schools did you attend?”

“None. I was home schooled.” Loki told him easily, standing beside the speaker’s podium, one hand resting on the edge of it.

The youngster’s face screwed up in puzzlement. And after a few other questions trying to place his level of education, Loki let it be known that he did not go to school in the United States, he was privately tutored at the higher levels and was well aware of certain cultural gaps but assured them that his bohemian education while unconventional was solid.

A bohemian education, such a useful concept.

While the Midgardians looked aghast at the idea, they did not dismiss it out of hand.

After a few moments, the questions basically came down to what have you accomplished thus far.

“While they were not in this field, I have innovated many processes--”

Terrance Wilkes, the oldest engineer asked in a voice that bordered on openly hostile, “What makes Tony Stark think a kid like you is qualified to teach us?”

“Mister Stark read my paper and decided that I would be the best person to elaborate on the information in it.” Loki told him, not the least bit disturbed by the tone of Wilkes question. He was used to the challenges of the elderly who suddenly realized that Loki was smarter than they were. At least in this setting, no one would suddenly brandish a weapon or try to blast him with a spell if they lost their temper.

Wilkes continued, apparently his irritation had been slowly growing during the orientation process. Part of the man’s upset seemed to stem from the fact that he was unable to find background information on Simon Cole and Lorin Othinnson in preparation for this class.

“I mentor at MIT,” Wilkes told Loki, leaning back and crossing his arms. “Some of the student’s there speculate that Simon Cole, Dennis James Amsmil, June Farley and Nadine Wilson Seryn are all pseudonym used by the same person.” He fixed Loki with a baleful stare, one which most likely struck terror into the employees who worked in his department. Fortunately, Loki had been glared at by much scarier beings and merely nodded for him to continue. After all it wasn’t likely that the man would actually be able to find out who he really was.

When he received no response from Loki, he uncrossed his arms and leaned forward. “I think they are on to something, since I have spent the last week reading the works by those other authors. So if you did write those other books, why are we even here? I would like to know why we should take you seriously.” Wilkes flung out an arm, almost hitting the man sitting beside him, who was staring at him like he was crazy. Loki stepped away from the podium his hand drifting across the top of it as he moved towards the table that Wilkes was sitting at.

“Every one of us has deadlines to meet, but instead of working on them, we’re sitting in a crazy class set up by Tony Stark taught by a kid with no verifiable credentials.”

“Oh very good. I do like people who do their background research,” Loki flashed him a shark-like grin, placing his finger tips on the table before Wilkes. “But regardless of what you think about my

credentials,” Loki leaned forward until his palms were flat, “You are being granted a chance to learn something that not five people on this planet currently have a chance of understanding unaided. And what I don’t understand is why you’re being disrespectful to the person who is giving you this opportunity?”

Wilkes leaned further back, throwing his hands up, “You write romance novels for crying out loud.”

Loki barked a laugh, his eyes narrowed in amusement and his reply was almost playful, “And your employer occasionally drives very fast in a circle. What difference does it make what I do in my spare time? The only fact that should matter is that I can explain this to you.” Loki lifted a hand to tap two fingers gently on the StarkReader sitting between them, “Can you explain it to me?”

“No?” Loki smirked insolently at Wilkes before regarding the rest of the room genially and sauntering back to the podium. He turned in an elegant swirl and stood beside it once more. “If not then at this point my age should be irrelevant.”

The tension in the room between Loki and the senior engineer was enough to disquiet the other men in the room. After sweeping the room with his eyes one more time he gifted them all with a soft grin before smiling sweetly at Wilkes who was muttering under his breath.

Loki had centuries of experience dealing with people less intelligent than he who wanted to tell him what to do. Far better creatures than this man currently sitting so righteously in front of him, muttering things that Loki could hear very well thank you. No, when the day came that he was bested by someone smarter than he was, it would not be by this particular mortal.

That being said... Just because Loki has had to learn to deal with such behavior doesn’t mean he enjoyed it one little bit. Nor, in this instance did he have to put up with... Or with this particular mortal he decided.

“You, I will not teach, please leave now so that those who are not a waste of my time can be instructed.” Loki said genially, amused at the alarmed look that flashed across the man’s face before it began to darken with anger.

“You can’t kick me out!” Wilkes bellowed surging to his feet, his chair hastily pushed back. “I’m the head of this god damn department!”

“And I am the expert consultant. So the question becomes will your employer, Stark International, decide that they don’t want me to teach these other people just because I won’t teach you?”

Knowing he was on fairly unassailable ground, an almost visible smugness rolled off of Loki. His nose even crinkled happily like that of a child whose been handed a sweet stick. The god really did love moments like these which sadly they did not happen near often enough to suit him.

“Do get back to me when you have an answer for that will you?” Loki smirked at the irate engineer waving a hand towards the door.

Angrily Wilkes began gathering up his belonging. When he went to pick up the StarkReader there was a long pale hand holding it down. Somehow Loki was right across the table from him again, head slightly tilted, smiling amiably, “I don’t think you need my tutorial. I’ll just have Ms. Johnson remove your authorization from this tablet. Do tell her I’ve taken possession of it won’t you?”

QUESTION - What one thing do you think could have been cut to tighten up this story? On the flip side, what one thing were you hoping to see that you didn't?

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia**. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Nine to five

Chapter Summary

Tony turns the tables. Loki is not amused.

Chapter Notes

***** TRIGGER WARNINGS IN END NOTES PLEASE
READ *****

Really helpful suggestions last chapter. Thanks so much to all who took the time to assist. If you haven't yet chimed in please do so. Remember Queens Grace 2 isn't totally carved in stone yet, so if there is something missing from this fic that I really need to think about including please let me know.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 43 Nine to Five

Bruce had successfully reduced the amount of 'Asgardian tonic' Loki took daily. The god occasionally still had a bad day here and there, so did a lot of people. With Loki staying so busy Bruce had even been able to reduce his earth based anti-anxiety meds. Overall, Bruce was fairly happy with the Trickster's health and very happy with the reward he had received for providing it. The money Tony gave him for acting as the god's personal physician was helpful, but for Bruce the best part of the deal was the necklace that Frigga had given him.

He and Tony had tried and discarded a few different types of holders, but eventually the pendant had been reset into an ankle cuff, not unlike Loki's... The irony of which was not lost on Tony or Bruce. However unlike Loki's, Bruce's ankle cuff had a strap that expanded under excessive pressure. Tony had wanted to make it look like a watch or bracelet, but Bruce was so protective of it that he wanted it to be hidden by his pants so that no one could see it. Tony had set the pendant into a swivel setting that shielded it one side from Bruce's skin, but he could flip it when he needed to Hulk out. The back of the pendant had return information on it and a locator chip. Not that Tony expected the swivel and expanding strap to break, Tony Stark's stuff did not break... But just in case... Since even Tony had to admit, the Hulk got a little intense sometimes.

OoooO

Lorin Othinnson the employee was so good that Tony honestly wondered where Bag-of-Cats Loki had come from during the New York attack. The god never missed a deadline, was always on time, turned in whatever paper work was required of him before it was due... Just in case a revision needed to be made.

If Tony could learn to be half as conscientious, he would be Pepper's wet dream.

Hell, Loki had even finished up the tower protection ahead of schedule and the god was still recovering during part of that. He had even completed the protections on the other buildings long before Tony had expected them to be finished. And his protection measures were working like a charm as was proved during a recent near hurricane. Even though the runes on the adjoining buildings were not as all-encompassing as the ones on Stark Tower, they were still pretty damn good. None of the protected buildings had sustained so much as one broken window from storm driven debris. None, nada, zip, zilch.

“So you’re sure the runes will work even if we cover them?” Tony had asked.

“Yes Stark, I’m sure. So long as the design itself stays intact, the rune does not have to be visible.”

So Tony had placed patches on the roofs and sealed the edges after the protections had been invoked. A procedure that both protected and hid the runes from prying eyes... But it made a total mess on one of his suits. Advanced robotics, hot tar and rubber roof glue did not generally mix. Fortunately, he had worn the old Mark Five which was totally obsolete and wasn’t even worth scrapping for parts. Loki had worn a set of Tony’s old shop sweats, much to his disgust. The god of fastidiousness was also less than thrilled about the amount of time it had taken him to clean up that evening. Nor was he happy that he had ruined a pair of his trainers as none of Tony’s old shoes would have fit the god.

After several hours of hard work, Tony, who had been protected by his suit, offered bathing assistance to help get the disgusted and totally besmirched Loki cleaned up.

Purely in the spirit of helpfulness.

While the god had declined Tony’s assistance in the shower, the bastard had come out freshly washed and shirtless, tracked Tony down and sat between a stunned engineer’s legs and get his hair combed and checked for stray tar and glue. Except for occurring in the living room rather than the bedroom, it was so much like one of Tony’s dreams he wondered if Loki somehow knew about them.

Which he might, for all Tony knew. Fuck, Loki could have an Asgardian dream-watching rune of some sort and tune into the Tony Channel on a nightly basis.

At any rate, Tony now had proof that jeans were not what one should be wearing when a hot Norse god decides to plant himself between your thighs. By the time the bastard decided his hair had been checked enough to braid Tony was more than... Uncomfortable. And if Loki’s braid was a little tight that night... well lots of things were tight, so the god would just have to get over it. And then exactly like Tony’s dream, the god turned and absolutely flowed up into Tony’s lap, his long legs straddling Tony, while shapely white fingers twined into Tony’s hair pulling his head back so that he looked up from that scrumptiously sculpted chest and into the face of a gently smiling Loki.

“Stark?” the god purred, his voice somehow transforming the single syllable of Tony’s last name into a tantalizing promise of absolutely filthy delight.

The sound of which did nothing to help the lower body crowding situation Tony had going on with his jeans. Nor did it help when Loki bent his head his head, wicked green eyes locked onto Tony’s. Loki’s mouth only inches from Tony’s own.

“Yeah Bambi?” Tony breathed. He wanted to say something else, but his mind just turned all hazy and the only thing he really desired right now was for Loki to either bend his head just a bit more or let go of the grip he had on his hair so Tony could see if kissing Loki in reality was even half as hot as it had been in his dream. He briefly pondered the belly warming thought of softly kissing

and biting Loki's lower lip until the god moaned when a sharp tug on his hair recalled him to the present.

"Stark I say to you that if you don't quit propositioning me every other time you open your mouth, I am going to make it my mission in life to see that you die of unrequited lust." Loki shifted lower on Tony's lap causing him to groan. "I believe your Midgard term for it is 'Terminal Blue Balls'."

The playboy fought not to moan out loud as the god crawled off of him.

Okay, Tony told himself with a tiny pang of guilt. So maybe he *was* pushing a bit too much for the god's comfort. After all Flawed Design was sixteen kinds of restrained when he was trying to keep his normal crazy in check. So maybe it really wasn't fair for Tony to be so insistent. But fuck if it wasn't hard having that much tall, dark and gorgeous parading around and not being able to touch it!

The playboy, who hadn't had to wack off this much since he had been in his twenties, well aware that something was at work here besides the fact that Loki was a genius with a good looking set of cheek bones, long legs and a nice ass. The real problem was that there was nothing Tony loved more than a challenge. What he could have with little effort meant nothing to him. However he became insanely, with emphasis on the word *insane* he thought wryly, determined when something or in this case, *someone* was truly unobtainable.

Tony watched the god saunter out of the room without even a backwards glance. After a moment he asked, "He in his room yet Jarvis?"

"Almost... Yes sir. He just closed his door."

Not wasting another second Tony threw himself against the back of the couch as his hand dove down the front of his pants to rearrange his package into a marginally less painful position. "You must think I'm acting crazy don't you Jarv?"

"Oh, I would never think that Sir."

Removing his hand from his pants, Tony's lip curled ruefully.

"Besides which," The AI continued in a thoughtful tone, "If you are speaking specifically about your infatuation with Mister Odinson I am quite sure that he is not as indifferent to you as he would like you to think. He watches you quite closely sir. And often smiles at you when you're not looking."

"Prince Paranoid watched everyone closely Jarv. And in case you haven't noticed he continually smirks at us poor mortals.

"Indeed sir I have noticed that, however I do hope I can differentiate between a smirk and a genuine smile. Especially one that is accompanied by an increased heart rate.

Oh really?

Tony felt a genuine smile ghost across his lips.

It was so on.

OoooO

Dinner out with Pepper occasioned a frenzy of paparazzi while Tony helped her out of his Audi.

“So you guy’s back together again?” One called out as flashes momentarily blinded them.

Only Tony was close enough to hear Pepper’s derisive little snort. Tony lowered his sunglasses peering at her, “Really Pep?” he asked with a smile while ushering her through the crowd into the safety of the Standard Hotel’s lobby. Pepper loved the Grill’s pan seared lamb chops. Tony loved that the place always put her in a good mood. Not that he had put her in a bad one recently.

“So to what do I owe the honor of having my best girl accept my dinner invitation this evening?” Tony asked as they were seated.

Pepper waited until the waiter had taken their drink order before answering. “Why wouldn’t I?” she asked, smiling across the table at him. “You’ve been signing the papers I send you in a timely manner, answering R & D questions remarkably quickly and haven’t even caused a stock crashing scandal in months.”

“Hang on a minute.” Tony pulled out his phone and started tapping away at it.

Pepper rolled her eyes knowingly. “Tony, what are you doing?”

He hit send and looked up with such an innocent expression that Pepper started to laugh.

“What?”

She pointed at his phone.

“This? Pffftt. This was nothing.” Tony said waving his hand in an airy dismissive way.

“Nothing?”

Tony made a little moue shrugging his shoulders just as the phone chimed. He glanced down for a moment before wagging his eyebrows. “Ah. How is next Tuesday look for you?” the billionaire asked artlessly.

“How is next Tuesday for what, Tony?”

“My latest stock depressing scandal. Jarvis says the next slot open that I can devote to that is Tuesday.”

Of course to do that, the playboy figured he was really going to have to up his game. It was pretty amazing, but Tony found that having to keep track of one previously homicidal Prozac gulping god as his wingman did take the edge off his more socially unacceptable behaviors. He smiled inwardly at the absurdity of it all. And the only thing about that pairing that kept the gossip rags off Tony’s case when he showed up so regularly with a hot dude was that fact that they almost always took girls home with them... and occasionally those girls talked. Not that at this point Tony cared. Despite his previous discretion with male encounters the billionaire would have put up with being openly branded as bi if he could have gotten the god to first base even. Well okay second at least...

“Ah.” Pepper pulled out her phone and tapped out a short message. A very few seconds later, Tony received a text from Jarvis telling him that an important R&D meeting had been placed on his schedule for Tuesday.

When Tony opened his mouth about to protest, Pepper leaned forward and laid her fingers firmly across his lips... Which Tony promptly kissed. “Okay. Be that way then. Thursday will be a meeting day and I’ll reschedule my scandal and get back to you with a new date.”

Pepper quirked a brow at him. “Tony please don’t do me any favors.”

OoooO

About three weeks after Pepper had declined Tony’s offer to create some stock depressing scandal, Fury arrived at Stark Tower. He had brought Natasha with him to arrange the details of Loki’s attendance at an industry conference that afternoon.

“Stark are you fucking insane?” Fury had screamed the night before.

“Jury’s still out on that one,” Tony replied before he hung up and prodded Loki into the hotel bar for an ASME after session wind down. They were going to meet with a couple of engineers Tony wanted to speak with. And meet two other engineers who wanted to talk to Loki, as they had somehow figured out that Lorin Othinnson from Stark International was the real name of Simon Cole that so many of their new college hires were talking about.

However, as entertaining as it had been to hang up on the cranky Cyclops, Tony hadn’t enjoyed Fury waking him up at an ungodly hour this morning to continue the rant.

“Fury, what the fuck do you want now?” He mumbled half asleep. Don’t you know it’s the middle of the night?”

“It’s after nine o’clock Stark and I--”

“See middle of the night. Jarvis why are you even putting his calls through? Especially at this ungodly hour?”

“I do apologize sir. But you did ask to be woken up at eight forty-five so you and Mister Odinson can be in the car by eleven.”

Tony rolled on his stomach, still enjoying the fact that he could comfortably do so now that his arc reactor was gone. He buried his face into a gloriously soft pillow for a sleep tempted moment, before a thought occurred to him. Tony lifted his head frowning, “Was I drunk when I told you that?” he asked, eyes squinting against the strong morning light coming in the windows.

“Not noticeably sir. But you have been sleeping rather soundly. I thought Director Fury’s communication might help get you up and moving.”

“Wait just a minute. Are you are using my phone calls as a wake up alarm for Stark?” Fury’s demanded.

“Don’t answer him Jarvis.” Tony ordered, grumpily rolling to the side of the bed and sitting up. “Look Nick, you do not get to decide where the god of physics research goes. Only I get to do that.”

Now that Tony was awake, really awake, his bladder apparently had more important stuff to discuss with him than anything Fury might have to say. Tony stumbled to his feet and headed toward the bathroom.

“Look Stark, there is a big difference between you and that homicidal asshole randomly hitting one of the hundreds of night clubs in the city and being at an advertised convention where your company is one of the sponsors.”

Dropping his boxers to the floor Tony gave a low groan of relief.

“Doom has from time to time taken an interest in you and your company. What if he has someone there watching you? Someone who might mention your very distinctive employee? We can’t take any--”

Wishing Fury would just shut the fuck up, Tony flushed the toilet.

“Stark! Are you in the damn bathroom taking a piss while I’m talking to you?”

Grinning cheekily at disbelief in Fury’s voice Tony stepped out of his boxers. He absolutely loved getting Fury wound up. “Actually no. I’m not taking a piss while I talk to you. But it would be correct to say that I had taken one. Past tense Nick. What do you think is going to happen when you call and wake someone up? It would also be correct to say that I am going to go take a shower right now.”

“Fine Stark, take your damn shower. Just don’t take the Space Punk to anymore conferences without telling us about it.

“In the words of our favorite Space Punk... *I do what I want* Nick. So say hello to Coulson for me and have a wonderful day. Jarvis, hang up please.” Tony said turning the water on and smirking as Fury was cut off in mid threat.

OoooO

Tony was getting dressed when Jarvis spoke, “Sir, Director Fury has just notified me that he and Agent Romanoff are on their way to the tower. They should be here in about twenty minutes.”

Which meant that not only did Nicky get to be front row and center while he yelled at him, but the director would afterwards also get one of Nat’s blow by blow psycho-babble report of Tony’s reactions.

“Fuck does he have that damn helicarrier tethered to the roof of my damn tower or what? Let’s just lock down the tower before he gets here Jarvis.”

“If you wish sir. However Director Fury did ask me to tell you that since it was Saturday and the tower was relatively empty, he would have no qualms about calling in an air strike if you even think of hiding from him this morning.”

“He’s bluffing.”

“Most likely sir,” The AI agreed. “Still he did seem quite upset. I do agree that bombing the tower is unlikely, however that still leaves him an enormous range of actions to do that while less drastic are of still of an unpleasant nature.”

Oh joy.

“He also called Ms. Potts and she wants to be notified when he gets here so she can join you.”

“Pepper? Isn’t it Saturday? What’s Pepper doing here?” Tony asked buttoning up a well pressed red shirt and tucking it into a pair of navy dress slacks.

“As you know well, Ms. Potts often works on the weekend’s sir.”

“And that Jarvis,” Tony said as he buckled a slim black belt and shrugged on his matching suit coat, “Is why I don’t ever want to be the CEO of Stark International again. I just won’t. Is Reindeer Games up yet?”

“Yes sir, Mister Odinson is currently writing but he is dressed and ready to leave when you are.”

As usual Fury was not allowed in the penthouse but instead was brought up to the party floor. He was also not allowed in Tony’s private elevator. Let him drop his listening bugs in the public elevator where all he would hear was whether or not the coffee machine on the fifth floor was still broken or that the guy down in the mail room got lucky this weekend. Fortunately for Tony, either Jarvis or Loki were thinking, so when the black leather fetish director and his chief Hench-woman demanded a visual of his prisoner slash research partner the god was back on his secure floor, in the secure cell typing. Either he or Jarvis decided to go for over kill since he even had on his wrist cuff on. Precautions they hadn’t used since the god had received the electronic ankle and moved into a penthouse guest room.

“You know Stark, none of his one nights stands have mentioned him sleeping anywhere but the penthouse,” Natasha observed watching Tony closely.

“Really Nat?” Tony gifted her with a ‘gosh golly I wonder why’ look. “I can just imagine Pepper’s joy if it got out that Stark International has its own high security detention floor on the premises of their New York headquarters.”

Natasha’s lips quirked, the creases at the corners deepening minisculely as she tilted her head slightly in agreement and wisely declined to comment further about how that type of news might be a no-go for Pepper in terms of public relations.

Neither of the SHIELD agents mentioned anything else about where the god might actually be sleeping, instead they watched the security feed from the ‘guest’ level while they hammered out what concessions Tony would give them as far as the god’s parameters for being out in public.

Concessions which were few and far between. However since Tony did concede privately that the whole Doom thing might be a valid concern he did agree to allow them to provide some security outriders. With the understanding that the SHIELD’s personnel had no jurisdiction over the god in anyway except as external security. Nor was Tony or the Queen of Asgard going to foot the bill for them.

“Tony’s right” A newly arrived Pepper told Fury when it had all been explained to her. “You want them then they’re on your dime.”

After an hour of arguing details Fury had huffed, “Get him up here Stark, I want to make sure he really understands how serious this could be and I want him to agree not to hurt my agents in case they have to move him to safety in a hurry.”

Tony was in the elevator on the way down to get Loki when it occurred to him that he still owed the Trickster payback for that *‘I’m-so-not-into-you-aborted-lap-dance’* thing the other night. And wouldn’t it just put Fury into orbit he thought as he considered the idea that had just occurred to him.

Hummm, payback for the god of mischief and an aneurysm for Fury. What’s not to love?

The engineer was glad that no one was in the elevator to see the big grin that crept across his face as he considered his options. And more importantly factored in Jarvis’ recent comment. Perhaps it was time to find out how the god of sinfully long legs really felt? Perhaps it was even past time.

“Jarvis be ready in case Rudolf flips out will ya?” Tony said, thinking how much fun this was going to be and how pissed the god would be when it was over.

Mindful of their audience they both went through the motions of using the full security protocols to cycle Loki out of the cell. Not that they thought they were fooling anyone per say... But more to let Fury know that they were available if need be even if they normally weren't used these days.

"Well come on Reindeer Games, Big Daddy Eye Patch otherwise known as Director Fury wants to see you." Tony said a few minutes later while waiting for Jarvis to cycle Loki into the security foyer. The minute the elevator doors closed giving them privacy, Tony turned to the god, "Not that you really care." He said genially.

Which the god didn't. By the terms of the contract, Fury had no say so over Loki or his actions. And Loki had a touching faith that no one on Earthgard wanted to upset the King of Asgard. As for Fury's personal get in your face type of communication.... Loki had once confided to Tony that after centuries of being yelled at by Odin, the whole sinister eye patch glare didn't work very well on him.

"Just wonderful Stark," the god said with a wry expression. "Any day I get to be harassed by your Director Fury is just a marvelous day."

Mentally reviewing his plan of attack, Tony didn't say anything.

Loki's expression flashed uncertainly. "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Like what?" Tony laughed, shifting closer and running a knuckle down the front of Loki's shirt. "Jarvis take the scenic route will you?" he breathed. Watching the god's reflection, he waited until Loki had turned his eyes upwards, obviously wondering what Tony and Jarvis were up too.

Which he was about to find out right....

"What the--" Loki yelped, as Tony crowded him into the corner and started running his hands up and down places that normally weren't touched in an elevator. Or at least places that normally weren't touched in an elevator by sober people. He went to push Tony away.

"Ah. Ah. Ah." The engineer chided. "Jarvis is watching. You're wearing a tazer on your ankle. Please don't try anything too physical."

"Are you insane?!"

"Or at least not that kind of physical," Tony whispered pressing himself fully against the god. And damn if he doesn't feel like a greedy thing right now. With the *growing* evidence of Loki's interest, Tony would have liked nothing better than to just spend the next hour seeing how kinky the two of them could get in this small box surrounded by mirrors and wood paneling. Realistically Tony knew that he didn't have much time as he slid his hands around to grab Loki's perfect ass, pulling him in tight. Shifting Loki slightly to get him out of the corner and flat against the wall, Tony removed one of his hands off that luscious ass snaking it down the back of the god's thigh then around to his front. Pressing hard, he stroked over Loki's hardening cock up a trembling belly and chest to slide Loki's jacket off his shoulder, tugging on a sleeve to remove it completely.

"Stark!--"

While this may be a prank. And it is, totally, there is a really big part of Tony that would really like it to be happening for real. He *has* dreamed of this after all. And yeah a big part of it might be Tony's desire to conquer where he has been denied.

However Tony also had a smaller voice warning him not to go so far as to fuck this up. Reminding him how much he has enjoyed the god's company when they're working, how much fun he has

when they go out or even just hang around doing little things. This little voice pointing out to him that there had been months of close contact between them and Tony had yet to become bored of the god's company. Not even something he can say for his time with...

Tony's not even going to think about that right now. Nor is he going to compare his attraction to tall, lean sculpted bodies... even if they are of different genders.

"No. I've wanted to get my hands on you like this for months," The engineer husked grinding hard against a protesting Loki. He let go of the jacket sleeve he had just removed and ran his hand possessive up Loki's dress shirt feeling the hard muscles underneath before the same hand curled around Loki's neck and pulled the god's head down enough that he could stretch up for a very wet kiss.

Loki froze.

Tony took advantage of his immobility to repeat his earlier motions with his other hand, dropping the suit coat on the floor. He might not have much time, but fuck if he isn't going to make the most of the time he does have. He looked up to see startled, but not in the least bit hostile green eyes regarding him in amazement. And Tony would be lying if he didn't admit he got off on the way that Loki bit his lower lip as his eyes shyly shifted away from him and a wild blush spread across the god's face before he snapped at him.

"What in Hel's name has gotten into you Stark!"

Tony chuckled nuzzling the god's neck as he slipped one hand down to stroke the taller man's ass while the other rubbed forcefully over Loki's stiffing cock. "Come on, just admit you like it."

"Huh?" Loki asked distractedly. Oh yeah, Tony knew he still had it as someone started to come to full attention.

Tony let go laughing softly as he scooped up Loki's discarded jacket. "Okay take us home Jarvis," he commanded, keeping the regret out of his voice as he thrust the jacket into Loki's grasping hands.

"You might want to just hold in front of you for a few minutes," He advised kindly.

"What?! No!" Loki's lips curled into a snarl, "Stark!"

At that moment the doors opened. Fury was there waiting with his favorite 'bad ass' pose. His feet spread, coat hung open and hands behind his back glaring at the god who was holding the jacket in front of him thankfully hiding a fairly impressive wood and standing there like deer caught in the headlights.

Standing by the elevator control panel at an angle that hid his own hard-on, Tony pushed an angry, confused and thoroughly aroused Loki out towards the waiting group trying his best to look innocent. Not something he could usually manage when he in fact wasn't. "You guys start without me, I'll be right back," he told a confused Pepper as the elevator doors closed hiding his wide smirk.

TRIGGER WARNINGS - Previous Dub/NonCon has changed to Present Dub/NonCon for Pranking of a Sexual Nature that gets way out of hand.

Tony makes a spur of the moment decision to wind up Fury and get back at Loki for previous chapters Lap Dance. This is by far not his proudest moment. It has been several years and quite frankly Tony has not even considered how this will play out in light of past incidences that Loki had to deal with in Asgard. That Loki doesn't remember them being immaterial.

Actually this scene was based on the behavior of a group of guys in our school who used to prank each other much the same way trying to embarrass the crap out of each other. This of course being many years ago when this sort of behavior just resulted in a coach screaming at them for a half an hour at the top of his lungs.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia**. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

I don't own the Avengers or Thor, they are the property of Marvel and Disney, and are not my intellectual property. There is no financial gain made from this nor will any be sought. This is for entertainment purposes only.

Good times. Good times.

Chapter Summary

Amazingly enough Loki aggravates Fury. What are the odds?

Chapter Notes

This chapter.... Someone is pulling a fast one.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 44 Good times, good times

Not that Loki hadn't repeatedly told him so, but the god was a marvelous communicator. After the initial round of training for the New York staff, Tony kept two slots open in each of Loki's classes for non-SI employees. Tony reserved one training slot for a recommended student from his old alma mater MIT and the other for a government scientist. Lots of NASA guys, mostly 'cause Tony had a soft spot for them, but mostly SHIELD's people.

Just because I am that much of a nice guy he told himself.

And it also shut Fury up. Besides which, Tony was using this favor as insurance in case anyone found out about the engineer paying Loki not to publish certain things. Things like the little gem Tony was currently, gleefully, working through. Tony hoped to have all the ramifications worked out and perhaps even some practical... ie profitable applications in the pipeline before anyone else even saw that damn paper.

Loki's classes were going great, except perhaps for the god's habit of evicting one person every class. No matter how many times Pepper, Tony and that Johnson chick from HR talked to him about it, Loki still did it every damn class. Human Resources had even tried giving Loki info on the attendees ahead of time so he could veto someone before the classes started if he wanted to.

But oh no. The bastard never did.

The attendees that got to stay raved about the classes so much that Tony's preferred method of dealing with the problem was to ignore it. The head training coordinator for Stark International pretty much just sighed and started over booking the classes and warning the attendees that one of them would be sent home. There were still sometimes wasted travel expenses, but at least that extra space that opened up every class wasn't wasted. While to Fury's supreme irritation, it was often a SHIELD attendee being dismissed, it wasn't always. Sometimes it was the promising pupil, or sometimes the other government scientist being dismissed. But occasionally it was a Stark International employee. Jarvis had pointed out that when it was an SI employee; it was almost always a senior department member.

After the tip-off from Jarvis, when Loki did dismiss an SI employee, Tony himself took a good hard look at the SI personnel who had been banished. It was sometimes enlightening to say the

least. Loki never would tell him why he had banished anyone. Tony's surreptitious snooping once brought up some pretty unsavory crap on a European division's department head. And really there was no way Loki could have known about the guy's personal life. But at any rate Tony had sent an anonymous tip about the guy to the local authorities of things they might want to chat with him about. Fortunately for Human Resources, criminal behavior was not usually the reason for a student to be dismissed. Often it was due to the attendee having autocratic tendencies.

Tony chalked it up to Loki having a thing about centuries of having to put up with assholes in general and authority figures in particular.

One plus side of the whole dismissal procedure, was that the other students were on their best behavior as they didn't want to risk Loki deciding that this would be the class during which *two* people were sent home.

Needless to say, Loki had more than his share of HR complaints filed against him, mostly by senior staffers. Or at least he did until the wiser ones realized that being kicked out of his class was bad, but complaining about it was worse. Especially once Loki decided that personnel complaints were a two way street. That at least stopped comments about 'boy-toy', 'fuck-buddy' and 'lab candy' being bandied about. At first it was only when the god walked through the halls, later it stopped pretty much everywhere.

Reindeer Games had terrifyingly sensitive hearing. He also had a gift for being inconspicuous that bordered on ninja level.

Word got around.

OoooO

Loki had seen a good bit of Midgard over the last few years. When not referred to privately with ruder terms, the god's alter ego Lorin was publicly known as Stark's 'wingman'. It had amused him to learn that a Wingman was a term which originated with their realm's air defense forces and denoted a male's companion who protected their back. Now, it pretty much meant a male who helped their companion get laid and tried to keep their behavior discreet enough that they avoided social criticism or arrest.

"Honestly I'm just so aggravated," Pepper grouched one evening while they were at a company function, "I've spent years trying to get Tony to behave at these things without success. I thought for sure he was going to get into a screaming match with Fujikawa over that stock swap proposal he keeps trying to put before the board. But before he could do more than be rudely snarky he ended up going to the bar with you to get another drink."

Loki's lips curled sweetly into a barely there, modest little smile before glancing over to check that the billionaire was still occupied.

Stark was currently sitting at said bar chatting up a luscious little brunette they had run into, while occasionally calling out greetings to passersby that he knew. "How the hell do you do it?" Pepper asked, shaking her head ruefully before turning her attention from the billionaire back to the god beside her.

Pepper's sudden laugh rang out across the room. "No. Stop it." She huffed quickly trying to smother the outburst which had attracted the attention of several people in the room. She had almost succeeded when one last undignified giggle escaped her.

"Problem?" Loki asked archly, keeping his expression firmly in place despite his desire to grin

cheekily.

“Stop with that innocent face. I happen to know from experience when you pull that look you are anything but.”

Loki let his expression drop briefly into ‘honestly disappointed’. “My dear Ms. Potts you do malign me.” Loki tucked his chin in a bit and look up through his lashes at her, throwing in some delicately furled brows and a bit of doe eyed confusion.

Her expression softened.

Loki was pleased to see that the combination that had derailed even Odin’s anger when Loki was a youngling, worked so well with the formidable Ms. Potts. Not that he had thought it wouldn’t, Loki thought privately amused.

Urðr knew Stark still fell for it eight times out of ten.

And honestly it was laughably easy to manipulate the little inventor. He had several times thought that Ms. Potts should have put him on the pay-roll as the billionaire’s keeper rather than a researcher. Stark in trouble was an irritable, bothersome companion. So it was really in Loki’s own self-interest to keep the inventor from bringing Ms. Pott’s retribution down upon himself.

Even if Stark hadn’t insisted that Loki attend the various company meetings and events, Loki was fairly sure that Ms. Potts would have. They had an unspoken agreement that Ms. Potts would rein Stark in when he became overbearingly unreasonable or possessive and in return Loki would use his ability to sidetrack the mortal and use his diplomatic skills to smooth ruffled social feathers if Stark became too rude or confrontational.

Stark’s possessiveness was a key component in the god’s ability to distract him. If no other form of deflection worked, all Loki had to do was drift away while keeping in Stark’s field of vision and then going to fawn over some zillionaire that wasn’t Stark. After Loki had once turned on Stark for acting like a chest thumping oaf in public, the billionaire had gotten much smoother about detaching the god and leading him away. The one exception to this behavior being Loki’s interactions with the newly paroled Justin Hammer. Instead of Loki being immediately, if discreetly, whisked to Stark perceived safety, Loki speaking to Justin was guaranteed to promote a completely different distraction for Stark.

The billionaire totally enjoyed Loki shooting down Hammer’s blatant attempts to woo him. Mostly ‘*Call me Justin*’ wanted Lorin Othinnson to come to work as a researcher for Hammer Industries. But depending on how much the man had been drinking, sometimes ‘Call me Justin’ tried to persuade Loki to meet him sometime for a drink or two. Loki’s baroque put-downs tickled Stark so that much that if a function was particularly dull, the billionaire would request an encounter as entertainment.

Loki was under no illusions that Justin Hammer desired him personally. The mortal wasn’t even bi-sexual as far as he could tell, he just wanted to get back at Stark anyway he could, even if it was only by luring away one of Stark’s close associates or company assets. Something Loki found amusing and intriguing in a twisted sort of way. And a challenge he found impossible to resist. So of course, one of Loki’s current amusements was working on getting the man interested in Loki for his own sake, and not merely as a way to aggravate Stark.

Besides, nothing made Stark giggle like a child more than Loki hanging wide eyed on the Justin’s every word like some hero worshiping youngling before abruptly walking away, leaving the man gaping and wondering what he said wrong.

Who could have known that mortal business functions would provide so much enjoyment for a Trickster God?

OooooO

After being held up for years by a coalition his equally wealthy neighbors, Tony had finally gotten his Malibu house rebuilt. And the billionaire was determined that it wouldn't be destroyed again. Partially because his insurance company had refused to pay for the rebuild since Tony had called the destruction down upon the place. But the main reason was that his neighbors had gotten the zoning laws changed. The new laws prohibited any further rebuild of what was deemed an attractive nuisance. Tony was unamused by their attempts to evict him from a neighborhood that he has lived in since he had first become an adult. So unamused that he was determined that nothing again would ever jeopardize him living in the one location he truly thought of as home.

And if that meant negotiating with Mister Wizard for the rest of Momma Frigga's jewelry that is what he would have to do. In all honestly he'd been saving them for something like this anyhow.

Since he and the God of Sinfully Tight Jeans were such good buddies now, Tony was hoping that this time negotiations would go a lot easier than the first time. Those discussions had been a nightmare the engineer hated to remember...

"Look, I've tried the whole rune thing; I can't get them to work. You make my building safe from attack and I'll make it worth your while." Tony was both tired and irritated from numerous unsuccessful attempts he had made trying to reapply the protective sigil. If he had realized that his buildings protections would be washed away with the first rain, the engineer would have erected a room over the damn things immediately. No matter how ugly that would have looked.

"You don't have anything I want." The god had told him haughtily. "I am more than paying my maintenance costs and I even have enough to buy what I want. What could you possibly offer me?"

"Well you've got some medical bills coming up..." He paused, not liking the dark look that filled the god's eyes. No doubt due to the fact that the medical bills were a direct result of Loki protecting his building. "Okay... So most of that will be paid by your health insurance. But hey! Christmas is coming up, you guys celebrate that right?" Tony rolled his brown eyes and made a face, "Well obviously not 'Christmas' Christmas. I mean, didn't the Christians steal it off of you? Well not you per say but--"

Loki hastily interrupted him, cutting short what had in his experience the hallmarks of becoming a long ramble. "Yule, Stark, or the Wild Hunt if you will, but yes, we celebrate Yule."

"Yeah, okay. Yule. Well don't you want an extra wad of cash to get your mom something nice? I'm getting Pepper a sports car, not that your mom would want one of those. But she obviously likes bling."

"Bling?" It took the god a moment to remember what bling was but then his confusion cleared and Loki's nose wrinkled as if the most horrendous smell in the world had been stuck under it. Worse than a decaying skunk, something like the clash of cheap perfumes at a discount perfume counter.

That kind of smell.

Godly brow furrowing slightly, Loki had looked down his nose at Tony. "What in the Nine do you imagine you know about my mother's taste in Jewelry?"

Sticking his hands in the pocket of the black zip up hoodie he wore Tony eyes flashed as he tried to

restrain the signature Stark smirk that was curling up at one corner of his mouth. "I imagine I know quite a lot there Dasher, since I have a whole chest full of the stuff. Which you would have known if you had taken the stick out of your ass and agreed to answer those metallurgy questions I wanted to ask."

Astonishment warred with outrage on the god's face before disgust laid down its cards and took the pot.

"You."

Never had Tony heard such a simple the word said with such loathing. This was saying something when you considered all the women that Tony had pissed off over the years.

"You have an entire chest filled with my mother's jewels?" The god had asked skeptically.

"Yeah. That is what I've been trying to tell you. "What? You think she just handed me a check or something?"

It was Loki's turn to be uncertain, "Not gold coin or bullion?"

"No. Should there have been? Just a whopping big chest of jewels." Tony was struck by a thought; perhaps Frigga wouldn't want any new jewels maybe she'd rather have some of her own ones back.

"Which I am willing to share nice guy that I am."

Loki studied him intently, green eyes trying to almost bore into Tony. After several moments Loki finally spoke. "I don't share Stark. I have told you that before. I want to see an inventory of the pieces and then I want them all back."

Tony smiled lazily at the angry god in front of him. If he hadn't already been the patron Saint of Mischief, Tony would have guessed that Loki was the Norse equivalent of Bastet. Since he was sure that if Loki had a tail he would have been twitching it menacingly. Not to mention that the gods clenching and unclenching hands very much resembled the flexing claws of a feline about to rend the shit out of something.

"Ummm. No?"

"All of them. That is my price to make protection runes that cover this building from top to bottom." Loki growled.

"Don't make me get a spray bottle." Tony said trying not to grin insanely at the adorably puzzled look that flashed across the god face before his menacing 'I shall shred your intestines' mask was replaced.

"Seriously, you can't have them all back. I gave a few of them to Pepper. And a couple were melted down and experimented on and there are one or two I like that I'm keeping. Besides that's a lot just to protect my tower."

"Oh. Well. By all means then," Loki waved his hands dismissively in the air. Obviously affronted, the god turned to glare unseeingly out the window, disgust for Tony apparent from the tension in Loki's shoulders and back. "Please have some other mage do it for you!" he scoffed.

"Look, minus the ones I just mentioned, you can have a quarter of them back if you do this building..." Tony paused for a moment as Loki's head turned looking over his shoulder, narrowed

eyes sliding over Tony in a more cold and calculating manner than the engineer has seen from Loki in a long time.

Okay then, fuck this, Tony thought deciding to go for broke. "And... Pop something quick and general on the roofs of the buildings immediately surrounding this one. Not as comprehensive as this building will get, since I know you can do better than laundry soap one, but just what you used in the last attack."

"You don't think this building is going to be hard enough." Loki still had more than a hint of growl in his voice but some of the frost in his overall stance melted as he turned back to face Tony.

"Well yeah. But I think I can stream line it just a bit for you. And if that works then I get the adjoining roofs? I'm tired of those bastards trying to sue me every time some maniac aims at my building but damages theirs." Tony rolled his eyes in disgust, "Like it doesn't happen to other buildings in town that aren't adjacent to mine."

Loki thought for a moment. "Tell me what you have in mind, but we will have to work fast. I want to redeem them before the next Yule celebration."

In the end they'd agreed that half of the remaining jewels with Tony guaranteeing delivery to Frigga before Yule. Tony's building protected top to bottom and then the adjacent buildings with a less comprehensive, but still kick ass, protection package being the entire scope of work. This meant Tony got to save the remaining half of the jewels for a rainy day. Since Loki needed less now than he had back then, Tony was pretty sure it was going to take every bit those remaining jewels to work out a deal for Malibu.

And so it did.

OoooO

Despite Fury's demands, Tony had waited until after Malibu to approach Loki on SHIELD's little side project. Besides, they'd been having such fun in California and there was no way he was even going to think about work or pissing off the Trickster. New York might have a more varied night life but Malibu had nearby access to the Sayers Club in Santa Monica and Hemingway's in L.A. The latter being hysterical as Loki flatly refused attempts by Madinna's people to get him to shift his seat at the bar. Marge of course didn't take no for an answer and pushed up to the bar and managed to finally move the people on the Trickster's other side for her group. Which would have ended it if she hadn't sat there baiting the god. Eventually her tossing around comments about rude nobodies and Amy Lee wannabes and pushing her companions hard enough that they kept jostling the god pissed him off.

Loki motioned the bartender over. While not shouting or anything, Loki's voice was pitched so that it was heard by well over half the people sitting at the bar. "Excuse me, but could you tell me who this inappropriately dressed, nasally, rude, dried up reptilian female thinks she is?" he demanded, while regally looking down at the faded super star.

It was amazing that the bitch didn't get whiplash from the speed with which she turned to start berating the Asgardian. She really never should have poked him in the chest with her overly manicured bony finger. Loki grabbed her wrist just as two badge flashing undercover SHIELD agents materialized to tell the star to shut up and come with them if she didn't want to be immediately arrested for assault. The astonished look of disbelief on her face as she was unceremoniously hustled out of the club for poking a 'nobody' left Tony almost lying across the bar howling with laughter and gasping for air.

Good times. Good times.

And totally worth the twenty minute passive aggressive bitch fest phone call from Colson the next day. Agent of course passing on Fury's demanded that they return to New York to relieve the work load on Loki's public security team.

But since he had fussed for so long, Tony made SHIELD wait another three days before he and Loki returned to New York. After all they couldn't leave until he had taken the god to Bar Marmont.

OoooO

"Hey Loki." Tony greeted the dark god sitting at the breakfast table. Loki, as usual was immaculately groomed and neatly dressed in dark blue slacks and a vest with a crisp white long sleeve shirt, black shoes shined to a fare-thee-well and a matching skinny belt. Tony rolled his eyes mentally. It had taken considerable persuasion to get the god not to wear his custom suits or ties in the lab, but to instead order some daily wear suits from Brooks Brothers and get them adjusted by a Korean Tailor that Pepper recommended. As far as Pepper was concerned, one side effect of Tony working with Mister Blackwood was that in self-defense the billionaire had to up his own casual wear game and now wore custom cut jeans, polos and the occasional tucked in dress shirt instead of old sweats and faded t-shirts.

When Pepper first noticed his wardrobe changes, she had demanded to know who Jeans and Polo Tony was and what he had done with her sweat suit wearing boss.

Tony tossed a folder over towards the god and went to get his all-important morning coffee. "Look at this for me will ya? It looks like it should work, but I've hit a snag."

Frowning, Loki finished the last bite of his toasted pumpernickel bagel, fastidiously dusted off his fingers with a napkin and pulled the folder towards him.

Tony got his coffee, dug the peanut butter out of the cupboard and retrieved his own egg bagel from the toaster while Loki examined the document. He was sitting down getting ready to take his first bite before Loki looked up from the folder with lifted brows.

Tony hummed inquiringly.

"This is something you were looking for?" Loki asked in a soft, disbelieving, Asgardian-accented voice.

"Umm yeah." Tony said, hiding behind his coffee cup. "So what do you think?"

"I think you are lying Stark. I think this is something SHIELD came up with." The god closed the folder, thumped his fingers on it twice as if to seal it shut and slid it across the counter at Tony.

"Tell Fury that I only do personal consults for gold bullion."

"You seriously got this wrong Reindeer Games. Just tell me, where's the problem on this design?"

"The problem Stark, is that if Fury wants to know about this, then Fury has to pay. In advance."

"Well what if I want to know too?" Tony asked a peeking up through his bangs. "Not that I am admitting that SHIELD has anything to do with this mind you."

"Of course not Stark. I totally understand." Loki said, patting his shoulder as he passed behind him towards the dishwasher to load his breakfast dishes. "Tell Coulson to call me, I'll give him a

price.”

“You know he’s going to be pissed.”

“Nonsense, wasn’t it you that told me that he’s never gets mad?” The god asked impishly disappearing into the lab for a few hours before he had to get ready for his next group of students.”

OoooO

Several days later after a nice fat payment in five and ten gram Credit Suisse gold bullion bars was delivered to him, Loki had Jarvis arrange a meeting with SHIELD. They met in the special training room that Loki used for his classes. The one that could be secured if need be. Fury and Colson were there of course, as were a few SHIELD science drones that Tony had no respect for. Additionally they brought two baby agents named Simmons and Fitz who were frankly blown away at actually meeting ‘The Tony Stark’.

They completely embarrassed themselves. The god was sure that the two younglings were only *just* restraining themselves from asking for *selfies* with the engineer.

Loki, sitting at the head of the table with a stack of folders smiled as everyone was introduced and seated themselves in chairs on either side of the table. Loki had of course made sure that there was no chair at the other end of the table. This was his meeting and there was no way that Fury was going to pull any power plays with him. Not that the god thought that likely in any case once they heard what he had to say.

After calling up a projection of the original documents, Loki spent spending several minutes outlining their original questions and asked if everyone understood the areas that they had asked him to clarify.

“We know what we asked *Mister Othinnson*. What we don’t know is how this device is supposed to work. Do you have any answers for us?” Fury asked testily.

Fury’s words were still hanging in the air when Tony knew there was a problem. Loki’s eyes had lit up with an unholy gleam and the corners of his lips quivered with suppressed amusement.

“Ah yes.” Loki passed out folders and turned so he could keep both Tony and Fury in his direct line of sight. He had already requested that Jarvis record multiple views of the meeting, but he wanted to see Tony’s face first hand.

“This, Director Fury,” he said gleefully, opening the folder and tapping the first page of the report. “This is an intellectual exercise of something that does not and will not ever exist. It is a redrawn plan that was stolen from me several months ago.” He smirked. “Now, do you want me to tell you why this doesn’t work? Or will my report be enough?” Loki lifted the report and then opened his hand, allowing it to drop back onto the table.

Tony and Fury’s responses were not in the least disappointing, the engineer lit up like a Christmas tree, SHIELD’s director looked like he was going to pop an artery.

“Seriously Fury? Did your guys actually spend two months trying to figure out what this was? I mean, yeah I looked at it, but only briefly before I presented to Tesla here, Agent No Fun wouldn’t give me an advanced copy. You clowns studied the damn design for over two months and couldn’t figure that out?”

OoooO

The room was quiet for several minutes while everyone read through the report. Except for Stark snickering and commenting as he read some of the phrasing that Loki had laced through the hard science explanation. Loki was pleased at his appreciation; 'snark' was generally not something that was easily incorporated into a technical document that one was being paid a large sum of money to produce. By the time that Stark had gone through the whole report, Loki was practically beaming at his praise as the engineer kept going on about the greatness that was both the original 'looked like something real' plans and the 'accurate overly detailed and ultimately insulting' report.

The others in the room were perhaps less happy, the younglings looked embarrassed, the head science drone looked stricken and Fury was livid.

Loki lived for moments like this.

"Well?" Fury snapped at his lead scientist.

The senior scientist raised stricken eyes to Fury. "We'll need to study this of course," he said hoarsely, "but from a quick reading Mister Othinsson's report, he may very well be correct sir." The man's adam-apple bobbed a moment. "I would like to have it explained in detail, but I think it would be best if we did that after we have time to study this."

No one said a word for several moments or indeed barely moved until Fury nodded stiffly to Coulson.

"Thank you gentlemen and you too Ms. Simmons. If you would make your way back to your work stations, the director's office will call you to schedule a meeting as soon as we've all had time to study this." Agent Coulson said quietly, signaling for them to move quickly with several motions of his fingers.

As the door closed behind the departing agents, Fury glared up from the report in front of him.

If Fury thought that Loki would be cowed at having an autocratic one eyed man stare daggers at him, he was very much mistaken. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Fury was not the one eyed man who could strike fear into Loki's heart. And besides, the opportunities to pull something over on someone who had been making his life difficult had been few and far between since he had come to Midgard. Loki wasn't sure that even Odin's presence could have persuaded him not to do it.

A ruse that he tossed out there in the first place which was then picked up and essentially handed back to him gift wrapped? Marvelous. That the opportunity was accompanied by an obscene amount of gold for such an easy task... Well that had just been gliding on the ribbon, as far as his trickster soul was concerned.

Loki licked his lips before smiling slowly. Besides, it amused Stark and anything that amused Stark was worth pursuing. Both for the benefit it brought him as the provider of said amusement and more importantly becaus--

"You bastard. You did this on purpose." Fury ground out.

Loki honestly wondered how this had come as a surprise to the man.

"You brought this upon yourself when SHIELD's employees stole this from me. Did you think I wouldn't notice how they spent more time being interested in what might be on my screen when they should have been concentrating on their own?"

"Do you have any idea how much money we spent researching this?" Fury growled the furrows on

either side of his mouth deep with displeasure. “Not to mention what we paid you to explain to us how it works. Which you didn’t do I might add.”

“Of course I did. Read my report. It ‘*worked*’ by throwing in various elements, which your scientists think they almost understand, into a design that appears logically functional while secretly being a hoax. It worked as a distraction which was what it was designed to be. Which I explained in detail I might add.” Loki’s chin lifted proudly and a gleeful light danced in his eyes. “You did receive what you paid for after all, so you have no real complaint.”

Fury snatched up the folder in front of him and surged to his feet. He appeared to be having trouble deciding just how he wanted to scream at the god in front of him. After a moments struggle he just snarled and spun towards the door. Coulson sighed looking tiredly at the god.

“We’ll be in touch,” Coulson said quietly as following Fury out of the room.

“Dude!” Tony shouted, unable to stay quiet even a second longer. “Did you just punk Fury and SHIELD’s entire research team?” His face was split by the widest grin that Loki had ever seen on the mortal. And even Loki had to admit this had been one of his better pranks.

“Yes Stark I did,” Loki said smugly, a big satisfied smile blooming on his face. “And I got paid for it too.”

Chapter End Notes

NOTES – Any resemblance between Madinna/Marge and any other former pop super star is completely coincidental. I’m sure she’s a lovely lady but I needed a visual reference.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta’d by the most wonderful **Mima Mia**. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Tony's isn't getting it

Chapter Summary

Oh no he didn't!

Chapter Notes

*** SEE END NOTES FOR TRIGGER WARNINGS ***

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 45 –Tony's isn't getting it

Tony had been only paying partial attention to the speaker; the rest of his attention has been spent surveying the crowd, seeing who was here this evening and picking out the people he wanted to talk to later. Some he wanted to talk to for business, some for personal reasons, like seeing if he could get Michael Mauer to give him the inside scoop on what will be different in next year's Porsche Spyder Coupe.

What Tony is very much not paying attention to is the well-tailored slender god standing next to him, which was getting harder every month. Christ, part of him had been attracted to the deity even when he was bag of cats, homicidal crazy. Loki had been a stunner then, but Tony knew it was more than just looks attracting him, hell; he met tons of beautiful people. No, he had been attracted because Tony is a total sucker for a bad ass, and the homicidal god had delivered, both literally and figuratively. However now it was more than that. Rudolf was funny, articulate, sinuous, genius smart, crazy hot, ridiculously tall, something he couldn't have and the main reason Tony was losing sleep lately.

Tony had often thought that it was unfortunate that with the removal of all those bad memories and tension from Loki's first time on earth and whatever crap had happened in Fairy Land that the god now looked so much younger. Loki now looked early to mid-twenties rather than the mid to late thirties look he was rocking when Tony had first seen him. And he had already overheard a few comments this evening that he, Tony Stark the great playboy, was apparently giving up models and now had a hard-on for boy-toys. This was really pretty unfair, since it wasn't the least bit true as Loki was several centuries older than him and apparently somewhat attracted to him, but was not the least bit interested in acting upon that attraction.

Which left Tony in the unusually frustrating position of having something he wanted right at hand, nominally in his control, but not available.

When was the last time something I really wanted was not obtainable, he wondered sourly trying to be good by not imposing on his...

Charge?

Guest?

Prisoner?

Friend?

Whatever.

Tony was also trying to make sure the increasingly annoying paparazzi did not get any pictures that could even hint of Tony having an interest in his constant companion Lorin Othinnson, Stark International researcher. He was going to be good. He was not going to aggravate Pepper with any bad press. He was going to remember that he could not, in good conscience, do a full court press on someone who was actually his prisoner. He was going to try to...

Tony spent several minutes telling himself what a great guy he was and how just this once he was not going to screw up. Even if that meant he didn't get to seduce tall, dark and crazy hot.

This is why Natasha, his nominal SHIELD escort for the evening was the one to break the news to Tony that his charge had slipped away while he wasn't paying attention.

"How long has he been gone do you think?" Natasha asked, surreptitiously scanning the crowd looking for Loki. "You don't think he found some way to slip his tracking cuff do you?"

Tony irritably whipped out his StarkPhone, "How the hell do I know, Red? You're the one who noticed he was gone. You tell me." He tapped on his ear piece and activated his GOM Tracking app, "Come on, Jarvis... Where's he at?"

"I'm going to go check out the rest rooms, just in case it is a simple 'call of nature' case," Natasha told him. "Have Jarvis call me if you find him before I do."

"Yeah, sure. Whatever." Tony muttered glaring at his phone, anxiety causing him to bounce up and down just a bit.

"Come on, come on. Jarvis where the hell is he?"

"Sir, I believe I have located Mister Othinnson. He appears to be in one of the smaller conference rooms north of the ball room in corridor three."

Tony felt a wave of relief Loki had not somehow removed the tracking cuff on his ankle. He sauntered over in the direction indicated by Jarvis, occasionally sharing a greeting here or there so his movements would not look rushed or out of place. Once in the main hall, it only took him a few minutes to locate the side hall where the smaller meeting rooms were located.

Since the locator couldn't pin point the exact room, Tony decided to just go down the hall checking all of them. As luck would have it, he only had to check three rooms before he found Loki. Although possibly, luck was and wasn't the word that Tony would have chosen to describe his feelings on finding his wayward charge.

Holy Fuck. Is that a great looking ass or what?

Tony was frankly stunned as he stood in the doorway. It was a small meeting room, perhaps only big enough for twenty people or so. But what it lacked in seating capacity, it more than made up for in view. From the door way, he had a perfect three quarter view of the god of mischief's long legs with his slim fitting slacks half way down those pale thighs.

While it was a relief to no longer imagine what all those hours of dance did to shape the god's smoking hot ass... Still... The strong rhythm and mesmerizing movements that were showcasing

the perfection of every muscle in the god's rear, legs and upper thighs were... distracting. Yeah, with the setting being what it was, the word Tony wanted to go with was distracting.

And to be honest, Tony could have lived without the fact that there was a pair of high heels belonging to a well-endowed brunette wrapped around Loki's trim waist. That those said heels were what was keeping the god's jacket and shirt rucked up enough to allow Tony to see all that lusciousness in action was beside the point. As was the fact that said god was trying to pound Coco through the meeting room table.

A brunette who was so lost in the moment that she didn't even realize that Tony was just standing there, gaping at the both of them. But that could have been due to her head tossing back and forth from the force of the strokes Loki was laying into her, causing her to utter sharp cries of pleasure with every flex of his hips. Loki's eyes were hooded, he had his lower lip caught in his teeth and an occasional moan escaped him as a thin sheen of perspiration covered his face.

If his life depended upon it, Tony would not have been able to explain why he didn't just back out of the room and close the door. He must have made some noise, because Loki eyes slid sideways glancing towards the door. A small frown puckered his brow as his mind processed that he now had an audience. But before he could say anything to Tony, his partner reclaimed his attention by starting to buck her hips harder to meet his strokes. Her cries became louder, more disjointed and her hips moved faster. Loki's movements matched hers, becoming faster and deeper and his own groans joined her increasing incoherent cries as her orgasm peaked.

After a minute or so, her cries softening to low moans, Loki slowed his thrusts turning a questioning look at Tony.

"Ummm, exactly what do you think you're doing?" Tony asked hoarsely.

Loki's reply was a bit breathless, "By the Nine Stark, I wouldn't think I would have to explain it to you of all people."

Tony rolled his eyes, "I know what you're doing, I just don't know why you're doing it. In fact you can't do this."

Loki glared at Tony, varying the length and speed of his movement every few strokes, "I most certainly can." He said a bit breathless, "It's consensual. I am wearing mortal protection methods." He paused a moment to bite his lower lip and close his eyes before looking again towards Stark. "So either ask the lady if you can join in, or get out and shut the damn door."

So he did, close the door that is. Not that Tony hadn't, momentarily, considered the offer to try and join in.

Tony was seething. Not only had he virtuously not tried to pick someone up this evening, he hadn't even considered it since he, not Natasha, was really responsible for keeping track of the god this evening. He was also in some discomfort from various areas of his body getting excited for no good reason. The small sharp cries and moaning filtering through the door he had just backed out of weren't helping his attempts to calm the situation either.

Snarling Tony stalked over to a small occasional table that was sitting several feet away and snatching up someone's discarded program. Not that he was the least bit interested in anything in the damn thing; he just needed something he could hold to block the view of certain parts of him until things calmed down.

"Stark! Did you find Loki?" Natasha asked, having silently appeared at his side.

“Yeah. Yeah I did,” he said grimly.

“Where?” Romanoff glanced down the empty corridor and raised a questioning eyebrow. “Tony, now is not the time to screw around with me. Where is he at?”

I am a grown adult man and I am not going to stand here and pout in front of Natasha. I’m just pissed that I had to go looking for the annoying little shit.

Oh really?

Tony pouted, he had totally forgotten about his asshole of a conscience, who took this opportunity to sneer at him.

“Tony?” said Natasha.

“Hey, I am not the one screwing around right now. I fucking wish I was, but hey, I’m not.” At Natasha’s glare, Tony gestured abruptly towards the nearby door. “Cupid’s in there, with a dubious brunette who most likely has had more than her fair share of plastic surgery.”

A particularly penetrating series of cries and groans drifted through the closed door. Natasha looked very poker faced for a few seconds before a sly grin crept onto her face. “Seriously Stark? Jealous much?”

Tony ignored her and they both stood there for several long minutes trying not to hear anything as the cries, which had peaked, began to pick up volume yet again.

“How much longer is this going to be,” she muttered.

Tony looked disgustedly at his watch. “I’m not sure, they had already completed the preliminaries and had started on the main event when I got here, then you showed up.”

Natasha’s eyes widened slightly in surprise, impressed despite herself. “You don’t say.” She said looking wonderingly at the closed door. “That is some fantastic control then.”

“Humpf.”

“Pretty good stamina too I would say. In a mortal body no less. And... well... she certainly sounds happy,” Natasha said, a small smile tugging on the corners of her mouth.

They stood there perhaps another five minutes or so as the sounds again increased in volume and then were capped with a loud shout from Loki.

After a few moments of silence, Tony glared over at Natasha. “You might want to make sure no one decides to go for another round,” he advised huffily. “I am not going in there again.”

Smirking, Natasha eased over to the door, listening closely for a moment, she knocked on it a moment before opening the door and sticking her head in. Her voice was very soft and Tony drifting a bit closer and could hear her softly apologizing for intruding, but telling Loki that he was needed out in the ballroom immediately. As she closed the door Tony caught sight of an indulgent smile before she banished it in favor of her favorite poker face.

They waited there a few more minutes until the door opened and a smiling, blushing brunette came into the hallway. She gave Tony a very odd look before being stopped by having her hand tugged on. She turned and Loki holding her gaze with his brought her captured hand to his lips and softly kissed it. The brunette’s breath hitched and Loki let go of her and slowly withdrew his hand. The

woman again looked at Tony before cradling the just kissed hand to her chest and drifting away with a sigh. Loki's eyes sparkled mischievously as he watched her go.

Running a hand down his shirt and twitching his jacket neatly into place he placidly met Tony's disgruntled look before turning to smile when Natasha gave a low delighted chuckle.

"I thought," she whispered as she tucked his arm in hers and started back towards the ballroom, "that you were the god of mischief?"

At Tony's loud snort, Loki looked back at him, carefully keeping his expression neutral. "My mother's brother is Frey, the god of virility, fertility and mortal pleasure you know. He has occasionally seen fit to give Thor and me some pointers." He looked down at Natasha, "And we may have occasionally accompanied him to feasts and Midgardian festivals for... practice.

Natasha smirked at Tony before asking, "So... Enjoy yourself?"

"Oh, very much," said the flushed, wickedly smiling god. Then he flashed Natasha a very old-school, crazy Loki grin. "Very much indeed Agent Romanoff. Thank you so much for inquiring."

Catching up and walking abreast with them, Tony was so disgruntled he couldn't help but hiss, "You weren't supposed to leave."

"I didn't leave, my cuff is still on my ankle and it didn't even tingle," Loki tossed him an unrepentant look. "Therefore I was still close enough to you to stay within the distance parameters you set up for my movement."

"I just can't believe you did that. In a meeting room at a conference? Did you even know that girl?" Even though he knew he was sounding like a jealous bitch, Tony couldn't help himself. If anyone had gotten action with a dubious brunette in a meeting room during a conference, it should have been him, damn it.

Loki stopped just before they entered the ballroom; he untangled his arm from Natasha and turned an intense look on Tony.

"Stark, I know you fuck women you don't know. This isn't any different than when we bring women home after an evening out. And I know you've had sex in far more public places than that. There is a bucket list of them on line for people who want to try and one-up you.

"Well yeah. But--?"

"Then I fail to see the problem." He told the disgruntled engineer a bit testily. "Please, explain it to me so I will understand for next time."

"Well then I don't normally have to watch it. And where the hell did you come up with condoms anyhow? Did you raid the stash in the guest room cabinet?"

"The attendant in the men's room sold them to me." Loki told him reaching into his back pocket to take out a slim wallet and hand it to Tony.

"I had seen that he had a supply of them when I was in there earlier. So I... borrowed your wallet. I will ask Jarvis to transfer the money from my account to yours. I really do have to start carrying them and money when I'm leaving the Tower."

Loki had the grace to look just a bit shamefaced over the theft of the billionaire's wallet.

Tony was flabbergasted; he knew he was not an easy mark for a pick pocket.

“You’re upset with me.” Loki said poker faced, watching Tony closely.

“Yeah, he is, but not about the wallet, Stark is jealous you know that,” Natasha chimed in with a tauntingly little smirk. “He’s the only one allowed to have wildly inappropriate sex in public.”

“I’m not jealous,” Tony protested glaring at Natasha.

“Ah. I am sorry, I was not aware that you had your eye on her,” Loki said in an mockingly apologetic voice knowing full well what Tony was jealous of, “You should have told me you wanted her Stark, I’d of looked elsewhere...”

“I don’t want her,” Tony snapped. “You know that isn’t why--” Loki lips twitched.

Stepping forward, Loki reached out a tentative hand and lightly stroked Tony’s forearm. Loki worried his lower lip, shooting such a contrite look at the billionaire, that Tony began to worry if there were dismembered bodies or something he needed to keep an eye out for.

“Loki. What did you do?” Stark hissed.

“I fear I have done you a great disservice.” Loki said in a low troubled voice, leaning in, his forearms hung loosely over the playboys shoulders resting his forehead lightly against Tony’s.

“Okay, now you’re really worrying me. What the hell did you do?”

Tony really needed to put some space between them; this was a public place for Christ’s sake. Trying to be good here, trying not to create any paparazzi fodder he reminded himself. And he really had been trying to be good tonight. But in the end, Tony just couldn’t muster the will power to be the one who moved away. Beside Loki’s arms around him just felt so damn good.

“Well... When you were just standing there watching us... Even though it didn’t look like it, the young lady noticed and wondered why you were there and why you were so upset.” He turned his face away, but gave Tony a sidelong look. “I didn’t want to tell her you were watching me because I was your prisoner...” he turned back towards Tony and whispered directly in his ear, his voice low enough to be private, but loud enough for Natasha to hear. “I was trying to explain that due to a complicated family situation I live with you... And she asked if you were my boyfriend.”

At Tony’s alarmed look Loki waved his hand distractedly, before returning it to Tony’s shoulder, but this time not hanging over it, but rather lightly cupping the back of his neck. “I told her no. But she didn’t seem to believe me.” He glanced to the side and then flicked a contrite look down into Tony’s agonized brown eyes, stroking little circles on the side of Tony’s neck with his thumb. “Since I really didn’t know how else to explain our relationship, I couldn’t really correct her.” His voice trailed off with a sigh as he took a step closer towards Tony, pressing full up against him, tightening his arms around him.

Tony’s brows furrowed in confusion. He understood what Loki had told the woman, he just didn’t understand what was happening right now. Loki was certainly not usually one for public displays of affection... and Tony was still a bit miffed about... whatever, but Loki was so close and holding him, so Tony just kind of tightened his own arms around the god... Not nuzzling his neck or anything really.

Damn he smelled good.

Recalled to his senses by a tiny Russian cough behind him, Tony looked up for an explanation as

dark green eyes started to twinkle.

Loki ducked his head to give him a kiss on the nose, before looking over Tony's shoulder his smile widening.

"If I look over there, I'm going to see a brunette chick checking me out, hoping I don't do anything to my cheating '*boyfriend*' aren't I."

His entwined arms felt the movement of Loki's silent chuckle.

The billionaire sighed heavily, "And she's probably taking a picture and pointing me out to her friends telling them that she's just banged Tony Stark's boyfriend isn't she?"

Natasha let loose an evil laugh.

Loki kissed him tenderly on the temple before unwinding his arms from Tony and stepping backwards. "Just a bit of fun really, like you had that day in the elevator." The god said with a tiny widening of his eyes.

Pepper and Fury were going to have to flip a coin to see who got to kill him first. Tony shook his head tiredly. *Oh yeah, he'd definitely just been Loki'd*

Chapter End Notes

*** TRIGGERS - Inadvertent VOYEURISM and could be considered EXPLICIT by some ***

What a fun cascade! Getting close to the end of this arc, don't forget to let me know what you did and didn't like about this arc as it starts to wind down.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful. They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Suheyra & Wildberries**. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Pepper is not amused

Chapter Summary

Yelling and fighting and temper tantrums. In other words, just a typical day at Stark Tower

Chapter Notes

Whooooo Hooooo! 20,000 Hits. *does happy dance* Not a lot to some people I know, but it makes me happy!

In gratitude for that milestone I offer up this chapter.

You have no idea how excited and grateful I'll be if I ever break 1k on the Kudos.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 46 – Pepper is not amused

Tony had spent all morning being yelled at. First in line of course was Pepper. While she was originally mad at both of them, after hearing that the conference incident had been a retaliatory prank for the whole Elevator Groping thing Pepper had changed her mind. Of course Loki doing his 'best 'kicked puppy' act with a side of 'head hanging in shame' had helped. Pepper had told Loki to get out of her sight and now was now mostly pissed at Tony.

When he had a minute to consider it, Tony was really going to have to try and figure out how Loki was still able to use the whole peering out sadly, head hanging thing even when his hair was slicked back. Previously, yeah, Tony could buy it. There was nothing cuter than a kid, or a really hot Norse god peeking out repentantly from under a mass of hair. So how the hell was Loki still managing to get the same mileage out of that doe-eyed thing of his with his hair all slicked back?

Fuck, she's yelling again.

"He's known as the god of mischief for Christ's sake Tony! How did you not think he would retaliate?" Pepper shouted at him, red faced in exasperation as she threw the tabloid with his and Loki's pictures in it on the table in front of Tony. "And besides didn't you start this whole mess? Aren't you a bit old to be grinding on someone as a tease? Not that you should be hitting on someone who is in your custody in the first place I might add."

"No, Pep, I know that, but--"

"Who is too young for you by the way."

"Okay, I understand how the press might say that," Tony said hotly. "But crap Pepper, you know

he is older than I am by several centur--”

“And apparently they mature slowly in Asgard, much like you do. And should I mention that he has had known mental issues in the past Tony?” she asked scowling at him while irritably throwing one of the tabloids back into her open briefcase.

“So do a lot of people Pepper, in fact--”

“Yeah, but they don’t all overreact the way he does,” she interrupted him yet again. “Beside you know that overreacting is a facet of obsessive compulsive disorders don’t you? Which we are all pretty sure is one of the issues he has.”

Tony was tired of all this, but he had a feeling it was going to go on all day with various people. Fuck Loki and fuck his weird ass idea of a practical joke. Tony’s joke had been innocently funny, Loki’s was just wrong. And who the hell waits that long to retaliate?

Asgardians apparently. Something maybe Tony should know after that whole Point Break, ‘*Man of Iron*’ discussion with Odin?

Tony had no idea why Pepper said he needed to talk to her, when she would hardly let him speak. “Hey, at least he didn’t try to take out New York this time.” Tony said trying to get a full sentence out.

Pepper cackled; very much against her will, if the accompanying evil glare was anything to go by. But Tony was still going to count it as a win. Tony Stark knew how to make a girl laugh and if you could get them to laugh, half the battle was over.

“An improvement I’m sure Tony, but still.” Pepper retorted, calming down slightly and rubbing her fingers across her forehead before fluffing the fringe of her bangs tiredly. “Look, he’s not the monster we thought he was when he first came here. I’ll give you and him that one. But Tony, he doesn’t respond the way a human would because... First, he isn’t human and second, he has some issues.” Tony started to retort but Pepper waved him to silence and then continued. “And frankly, getting a memory wipe is not the way to solve those mental issues. He still has them; they just haven’t manifested since he’s been here.” She tapped on the offending tabloid and glared at their picture, “Much.”

Looking like she was suppressing several kinds of inner sighs, Pepper gave Tony an exhausted yet irritated look.

“So you have to make sure you don’t do anything to bait him into displaying those destructive behaviors. Tony, you are supposed to be the responsible one right now. Do you understand that?” She wiped a weary hand across her face, “Do you think you could do that for me? Please.”

Tony nodded sullenly; he hated having to be the responsible one.

OoooO

Despite the secrecy agreements, enough people had been to one of Lorin Othinnson classes that information about him had started floating around the scientific circles. The first time he had been specifically invited to attend a conference as a Stark International researcher Loki was ecstatic. Not only were the conferences a welcome break in his routine but they sometimes gave him a chance to visit other parts of Midgard. Even if most of the attendees were not in his league intellectually, few of them were actually stupid. Also, so many different disciplines were represented, that over the course of several days, he was thrilled to learn quite a few new things.

If the truth were told, which it wouldn't be by him, Loki was amazed at the sheer numbers of people at the conferences. Asgard's practitioners of the scientific arts were many times more skilled, but there were far less of them. There simply wasn't a perceived need for a larger number of scholars when the ones that were alive were so very skilled and would only grow more so during their very long lives.

Age was another thing Loki was struck by. While many of the conference attendees were at least what the mortals would consider middle aged, there were still quite a few that were frankly as young as he was thought to be. Very few of them were as attractive as the women attracted to Stark's orbit, but their intelligence and enthusiasm usually made up for that. And the fact that the conferences were normally two or three days, allowed him to work in several private meetings while Stark was dragged off to court sponsoring companies for Stark International. Pepper was frankly delighted that Loki enjoyed going to them and signed him up for at least two a year just so Stark's 'sober' presence would be guaranteed. To Loki's delight, one of them had even been in Austria which the god had very much enjoyed attending.

Sadly, Stark only attended the conferences under duress, understandable perhaps since he had been attending them his whole life. And normally, Æsir Loki would have agreed with him that less intelligent people claiming to be your intellectual equals grated on the nerves... However Prisoner Loki was just delighted to just get out of his fishbowl (and yes, he had figured out Stark's Megamind/Minion joke). Now that he had both cash and gold, they were also a wonderful opportunity to buy a few things that Jarvis didn't have control over. Even if they had come to agreement on Loki not abusing his paper privileges there were some things that Stark still tightly controlled. Or at least he did when Jarvis was watching Loki.

Stark's prickly relationship with SHIELD in general and Loki's restrictions in particular made it much easier to circumvent the agents that SHIELD sent as handlers. When they weren't making sure that Iron Man didn't do something stupid that would give the Avengers bad publicity, their main concern with Loki was to make sure he didn't somehow physically slip Stark's extended leash. The god found it amusing that the handlers for the both of them included not only bodyguards, but also top SHIELD Scientists...Science Nannies, as Stark called them. The engineer said they were there to try and find out what would interest the pair of them next.

Not that Loki really cared. They were provided free of charge and their presence meant he could go to sessions that didn't interest Stark. Additionally, he often made use of them as look-outs since they couldn't easily break their 'good buddy' cover when he wanted to slip into an unused conference or guest room for a couple of hours.

They had tried to stop him once. In retaliation the god had pouted and been in such a miserable, irritable mood that evening that Stark had called their Agent Coulson and screamed for twenty minutes. According to Stark's contract he was the only one who could tell Loki what to do and SHIELD had better remember that. A few minutes later, the supervising agents received a call from their handlers that they were there to observe and protect and had no control over Loki activities unless he was actively trying to escape the venue, kill someone or was in immediate danger of death or injury.

So the day had ended up being quite enjoyable for the god on numerous fronts. Stark's strange possessiveness was a powerful weapon and Loki wielding it to his own advantage without the man noticing wasn't really hurting anyone. Or at least not anyone whose opinion Loki worried about.

If the SHIELD agents wanted to think Loki was merely looking for sex or messing with them on purpose, well Loki certainly wasn't about to disabuse their notions. For instance the young lady from Northwestern University was indeed a lovely brunette but unbeknownst to his SHIELD

nannies that was not what had originally caused her to catch Loki's attention. Rather, it was the full tool kit complete with a soldering iron that she carried in her messenger bag for her side job as a Conference Equipment Tech. After three delightful hours sequestered in her hotel room, Loki's messenger bag was heavier by one seventeen inch top of the line laptop, which she had rendered network incapable from the mother board out. She had also supplied him with several high capacity flash drives, contact information and had agreed to meet him at next year's conference. For her part, she left with the remainder of his ready cash and several of his smaller gold ingots.

Oh, and they had fucked like rabbits too. There was no way the god wanted her leaving the room unless she looked as sexed up as his babysitters expected. And besides, she was potentially useful in the long run, so if she wanted Loki to service her who was he to complain.

But the god's absolute best day on Midgard came not quite a year later, the day Jarvis forwarded him an actual paper invitation. He had been invited to be a featured session speaker at the main American Physical Society meeting for one of the Ferroelectrics and Anti-Ferroelectrics sessions. Those being his publicly perceived field of expertise. The invitation was issued to him not as a Stark International employee but had actually been sent to the mail drop of his publishing company, for him specifically.

Loki couldn't remember being this excited in the past century. He'd only been on the planet for six years, had only been really interacting with others for the past four and had only published one of his science papers... And yet he was being invited to be a speaker at one of their conferences.

Not because he was a Prince of Asgard, but because they thought his scholarship had merit. While the god had no intention of running around screaming like that ridiculous cartoon character with the extremely long blonde hair, he did admit that this was possibly his... Best. Day. Ever!

OoooO

"We've already gone to two conferences this year. That all Pep said I had to do." Stark said with a small frown as he poured himself a cup of coffee.

"But... They have invited me." Momentarily thrown off track Loki wondered if he had read the invitation wrong. He frowned and double checked the information package enclosed.

Ah. No he hadn't read the invitation wrong. Relieved he hurriedly assured Stark. "As a featured guest Stark, not as just an attendee. Look--" Looking up from the invitation he caught the tail end of the condescending expression that momentarily skimmed across Stark's face.

He faltered.

"What?"

Stark chewed his lower lip a minute. "Nothing buddy. I keep forgetting that you don't always get the nuances of Earther interactions. So they invited you as a guest speaker. Big deal, they've invited me numerous times before also. They have to; do you realize how many tracks they need speakers for? It just a scam."

"Well of course they would have invited you; you have a reputation in the field."

Stark didn't roll his eyes, but Loki did see the strain it took for the man not to.

Oh Norns, what if he was getting excited over something considered trivial? Hot embarrassment washed over the god leaving behind a sick, all too common feeling of embarrassment.

“Surely not everyone who attends will someday be invited as a featured speaker, will they?” Loki asked hesitantly, hoping he was just misunderstanding Stark’s reaction. Not that he really thought he was, but hoping he wasn’t somehow making a fool out of himself in front of the mortal.

“Oh gosh no. But still. It’s not that big a deal trust me.” Stark said kindly, which in a way hurt more than his earlier dismissiveness. Stark was being kind, like Loki was so pathetically stupid that it was just common decency to try to soften the blow.

They stood awkwardly there in the lab for several long moments. Loki was staring blindly at the previously extended invitations, fighting to push down the flush that still burned his face. Stark shifted restlessly at his coffee maker, obviously uncomfortable with being the one to point out how gullible Loki was being.

But then something about Stark’s stance didn’t seem quite right to the god.

Loki eyes narrowed. He had been a keen student of personal interactions since before even his formal childhood lessons had begun. He’d spent his entire youth, or rather as much of it as he could sitting at Odin’s feet, studying the people that came before the throne. So if there was one thing he did know it was when someone was holding back information.

“Tell me Stark. How old were you when you were first invited to speak at an event like this? And were you excited to be asked?”

Now wary, Stark answered. “Maybe twenty-three? Twenty-two? I can’t remember.”

“And were you excited to be asked?”

“Well yeah,” Stark said going a bit defensive, “but that was different.”

Of course it was the god thought bitterly. It was always different for some reason when it was Loki’s turn for something good to happen.

“How so? Pray enlighten me.” Loki asked coldly.

“For one thing we’re not going to that conference this year.”

“But I want to.”

“Well hey, I wanted a pony when I was a kid, we don’t always get what we want.” Stark paused looking off to the side in thought. “Well my folks were rich, so yeah I did get a pony, but you know what I’m getting at.”

Loki crossed his arms and waited to see what justifications Stark was going to offer him.

“For another, I wasn’t actually a prisoner whose movements are restricted,” Stark said as if that should have been so obvious that no other explanation was needed.

So *no* justifications apparently, how typical of the mortal.

“*Oh I see.*” Loki hissed venomously. “You, Stark, are a flaming hypocrite. It’s perfectly okay to bend the rules of my imprisonment, trot me out when it benefits your company or your ego, but when someone actually invites me for myself then it is too much trouble.

“No. No, that’s not it,” Stark protested. Loki whirled away from him trying to control his breathing, leaning heavily on the metal work table the invitation still clutched in one hand.

Loki gave a nasty laugh and turned his head to give the engineer a nastier glare. “Oh that’s exactly ‘it’. Don’t think I haven’t seen this before. I know exactly what ‘it’ is,” he spat.

“I’m telling you it’s not happening this year!” I don’t have to go and if I don’t, you can’t,” Tony retorted.

Loki drew himself up to his full height turning to look down on the smaller man. “And I am telling you it is.” Loki enunciated carefully through tightly clenched teeth, “I will present a paper at that conference as their guest or I will be back in the laundry room rather than your lab or your classroom.”

For a moment neither of them did anything more than breath heavily and glower at each other.

“So let me get this straight,” Stark asked his voice deceptively calm and silky. “If you don’t get you own way on this then you’re going to go back to folding towels?” Stark sat his coffee cup on the bench beside him with a loud clink of porcelain on steel.

Too angry to even speak civilly, Loki could feel his lower jaw jutting out and tightening. Stark remained silent, watching him. Looking up at him. Finally Loki lifted one brow and lifted his chin contemptuously in answer to Stark’s statement.

He didn’t move, but the shorter man’s complexion started to darken. “Really?” Stark’s voice was derisive. His eyes had a cold flicker in them and a nasty colder smirk stretched across his lips. “Let me tell you how this is going down. You are the prisoner; you don’t get to tell me what I’m doing. And you don’t get to decide where you’re working. I don’t have to let you go back to the laundry room. So unless you want to sit in your fishbowl for twenty-two out of every twenty-four hours you will work where I tell you to work, when I tell you to work.” Stark snorted dismissively, letting some of the tension drain off of him. “And you need to quit being such a fucking brat about it. You’re over nine hundred years old. Try to act your age will ya?”

Loki had spent a lifetime trying to work his wants into and around the larger framework of what other people desired. He was good at it. He had to be. Otherwise he would have been hard pressed to do anything other than what Odin ordered and the great Thor desired. But when would it be enough? Hot anger pooled in his chest and radiated over his shoulders and down his arms and into his hands which were now tightly clenched. Loki was a god and he would be damned to Jotunheim before he let a mouthy short mortal tell him what he ‘*wanted*’ to do. He would rather rot in that glass cage until Ragnarök.

Loki snatched up his messenger bag, shoved the invitation into it and spun around so fast he had actually made it through the security doors and had the elevator door open before Stark could catch up and say anything.

“Hey!” Stark yelled as he pushed past the Lab’s security doors to the elevator lobby. “You’re not going anywhere! Jarvis hold the elevator.”

“Yes sir.”

While he knew it wouldn’t do him a bit of good, Loki started deliberately mashing the floor buttons one by one. Not that he often used them when in Stark Tower since Jarvis arranged most of his transport.

Stark rolled his eyes. “The elevator isn’t going anywhere, so you might as well come out and quit being a baby.”

Loki was being a baby? That was rich coming from a man who had to have his woman and his computer run his life. “Jarvis, I don’t feel well, I think I need to return to my quarters before I become quite sick.”

“Yeah right, like that is going to work.” Stark scoffed.

“I am sorry Mister Odinson, I am currently unable to oblige you.”

While crude behavior was not something he indulged in often, Loki decided just this once he might make an exception. Solely for purpose of educating Stark.

“Also I feel an urgent need to urinate. Jarvis, please take me to my quarters.”

Stark’s eyes popped and his jaw dropped about a foot. For a moment he just stood there, eyes wide, mouth open looking like the village idiot. Then shaking his torso and shoulders like an ice cube had just slithered down his back the mortal gathered himself back together.

“No.” Stark gasped horrified.

“You *did not* just threaten to piss in my private elevator,” he demanded dark red coloring rising up his neck, his hand diving into his left pants pocket to get his phone pulling up the shock cuff app. Brandishing it, Stark promised dire retribution on Loki. “I swear to you, I’ll taze you ‘til you drool if you do that.”

Always a threat with Stark, and hardly one worth even listening to anymore. Loki shrugged unconcerned a prissy little moue appeared on his face at odds with the malicious highlights dancing in his green eyes. “Well hopefully I won’t void myself from the pain.”

Still angry, but now a bit wary. Tony said, “Seriously? You’re going to threaten to puke in the elevator? Very classy.”

“Well Stark, they do say you should tailor your threats to the audience.” He gifted Stark with his own evil smirk. “If you’re going to cause me pain, I see no reason to hold back the results of that pain. And I didn’t say I was necessarily going to vomit. There are other ways the unconscious--”

“Christ! You’re fucking disgusting you know that?!”

The outraged appalled expression on Stark’s face was priceless. And were Loki not in danger of actually being ignominiously sick he might have enjoyed being the cause of it.

“Jarvis take him up, to his cell not the penthouse” Stark spat, obviously livid. “And I don’t want to hear a word from him until he’s got off his fucking high horse. Understand?”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a **Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.** They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **summerlove_jls**. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

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Subterfuge

Chapter Summary

Tony prodded Garmr, that never works out well.

Chapter Notes

Short chapter but I promise I will post again this weekend!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 47 Subterfuge

Nothing. Nothing would make Loki ‘get off his high horse’ as that mouthy little mortal had put it. Keeping his ‘Egyptian Mask’ on, as Stark called it, Loki exited the elevator using every bit of control he had not to slam his fists against the mirror panels or kick the rich decorative wood door sections. He would have dearly loved to break something... Throw something... Kick something into pieces.

Anything.

He actually snatched up the blanket off the narrow bed and twisted it tightly in his fingers before he could convince himself that destroying one of the cell’s few comforts was height of Thor-like stupidity. Instead, he pressed his lips together in a thin line so they would hold back his screams of outrage and looked balefully around his cell.

When Loki came back to himself several long minutes later, he had to almost physically pry his cramped fingers from the blanket. He dropped it on the bed, resolutely looking away from it. He would not destroy his bedding. Nor would he rend his clothes or destroy the few toiletries he had down here. Looking around the cell, he really saw absolutely nothing else besides a half-eaten box of candy left over from years ago to vent his rage upon. The muscles in his jaw tightened so much he could feel them twitching.

This is what he had been reduced to in a destructive rage.

A flinger of chocolates.

And stale chocolate at that.

Nothing.

He had nothing but these few things and the contents of his messenger bag. He was a Prince of Asgard by all of the Nine, and yet the lowest wage grubber in this city most likely had more possessions than he did. The beggars he had seen on television had more items to place in their rolling metal carts than he possessed. As a youngling, almost anything he had asked for had been granted him. Once he developed his seiðr, he no longer had to even ask.

Now he had nothing.

No possessions.

No freedom.

No family.

No seiðr.

The one thing that Midgard had granted him that neither Asgard nor his seiðr had ever allowed him was general acceptance of his scholarship.

Despite his attempt to control his expression, Loki felt his lips draw back into a silent snarl.

Granted, it hadn't been his seiðr or his family or his freedom, but it had been something. The celebration of higher learning was something rare and usually unobtainable on Asgard.

Without conscious thought, Loki's arms wrapped tightly around his torso wishing that would still the roiling of his stomach.

This one thing that was available to him in his reduced state, this acceptance by the scholars of Midgard, was something he could only experience at the whim of Tony Stark. Loki shut his eyes tightly, a deep furrow creasing his brow as pain built-up behind his eyes.

And Loki would be damned until the cycle started anew before he would allow Stark to be dangle that last thing over his head like a child's sweet, and then snatch it away at a whim.

Loki stalked into the bathroom, tearing off his clothes and throwing them on the floor before almost stomping into the shower, not even adjusting the water beforehand. The initial flood of numbingly cold water was at least a fit match for his mood and managed to freeze his thoughts for a few scant minutes until warmer water made it into the mix.

The fact that Stark was not obligated to allow his prisoner to go to conferences was, even in Loki's anger, indisputable. Loki hadn't even been sure he had wanted to go to the meetings at first. But for Stark to allow and even encourage Loki's attendance and participation when it was convenient or directly benefited the mortal and then snatch away when Loki finally had an opportunity to shine in his own right was just cruel. Not unprecedented by any means, the Norns knew he should be used to it by now. After all, he'd had centuries of practice.

Perhaps what hurt worse, was how blindsided he felt that Stark would dismiss his accomplishments the same way Asgard did. Stark, who would normally celebrate intelligence and finesse triumphing over raw brute strength. But in the end, he supposed it was well to remember that Stark was his jailor, not his friend.

The flow of the water hid the jumping of his tightened muscles, with perhaps the exception of his fingers clenching and uncurling as he leaned his forearms against the shower wall. But that was not the real reason he stood there for over an hour with his head down and water coursing over him. The real reason was that there was not a voyeuristic camera angle on this damn planet that could see his face contorted in rage and sorrow at the unfairness of it all when it was hidden behind the curtain of his long wet hair. The Norns doubtless would find that hilarious, that the only privacy Loki could be assured of required him to be stripped naked. Sadly, the curling tendrils of black despair spearing his heart and lungs impaired Loki's appreciation of the joke that his life had become.

Truly he had nothing, no freedom, no family, no recognition and no friend.

As the water poured over him hiding tears of rage and sorrow, Loki truly couldn't decide which betrayal was doing the most to feed his desire to die and be done with it all.

OoooO

“Sir?”

“Yeah Jarv, what is it?” Tony asked, not looking up his task of pouring thirty pounds of his favorite coffee beans into the lab's coffee machine storage hopper. Tony's custom coffee machine was the size of a side by side refrigerator. Several years ago it had started its life as a Starbucks fresh brew coffee vending machine, but very little of that original machine was left. Tony had tinkered with it and improved it until it was the ultimate individual portions-freshly ground-freshly brewed-cup at a time-creator of life sustaining caffeine. Absolutely perfect fucking coffee without the annoyance of Tony having to take time to load with supplies more than once a month or so. And it produced a perfectly brewed hot cup of coffee. Every. Single. Time.

Okay, it was still vending machine coffee. However it was StarkTech improved, perfectly made, never cold, never stale coffee. Starbuck wishes the original machine had been this damn good. Hell, they wished their current machines were could match his. Tony's was faster, kept the ingredients fresher and he had given the whole thing a nifty '*StarkTech Coffee*' Backlit front panel that he had designed himself...

Was the time he spent creating the logo and the graphics for the plastic front panel a wise use of his design time?

No. No it wasn't.

Did he enjoy it?

Yes. Yes he did.

Every single time he got a cup of coffee he was absolutely thrilled with the damn thing.

And every time, Pepper made a face at it or its twin he had installed up in his penthouse kitchen. She also made faces at his StarkTech logo'd coffee mugs too. He was never quite sure if it was because Pepper saw them as a giant waste of his design time... Or was it because she hated when he branded stuff with his personally owned StarkTech logo and not the Stark International logo.

Tony wondered for the thousandth time if Pepper would shut the fuck up if added a Latte button to the damn thing. He paused a moment and ran down a mental list of requirements that would have to be met for the machine to also make decent Lattes.

Not that he was trying to stay busy to avoid thinking about how much he felt like a shit or anything.

“Sir, Mister Odinson says that he will not be coming up to the labs today.”

Shutting and latching the front panel of his coffee machine, Tony wiped bean dust residue off of it with a clean soft cloth before he looked towards one of Jarvis' cameras peeved. “Seriously Jarvis? It's been over a week. How much longer is he going to have his panties in a twist over this penny-ante shit?”

“I'm sure I couldn't say sir,” The AI said rather primly. There was a note in his smoothly

modulated British voice that shouldn't have been there, but was.

"Problem J?" Tony asked, well used to the nuances in Jarvis' voice. He used the cleaning cloth he was holding to dust off the front of his dark brown Metallica t-shirt and his regular cut jeans. Once he had as much of the coffee dust residue off as he could, he tossed the rag on the kitchenette counter and stuck his mug in the holder on the front of the machine.

"Sir, from Mister Odinson's past conversations and those of Queen Frigga, it does not appear that Asgard would have shown much interest in or appreciation of Mister Odinson's scholarly achievements."

Tony had also caught this nuance.

"Jarvis, are you trying to say that I am being a thoughtless jerk on this topic?" Not that Tony cares very much. He is a thoughtless jerk. Lots of people have mentioned to him before, numerous times even. But Jarvis doesn't normally call him on it.

"While I of course would not have phrased it in such an ill-mannered way, you have caught the essence of my thought pattern. After all, in your younger years, you yourself had a strong craving for recognition from your peers. Why wouldn't Mister Odinson?"

Taking his steaming cup, Tony went over to a nearby work table and started "Ouch. Jarvis, you're killing me. I might point out that he is many times older than I am and I got over it, so will he."

"Indeed. In time he might."

The AI paused for a moment and then when no further reply was made continued "One might wonder however, how long it takes a being that can live many thousands of years to get over a disappointment. While not too much stock can be placed in myths of course, it does occur to me that there are many references of godly quarrels that lasted a millennium or more."

Aw Fuck.

OoooO

When Loki had returned from having his silent screaming fit in the shower several days ago, he had thrown the damp towel that was wrapped around his hips onto to the floor and crawled naked under the slightly dusty blanket. After all, it wasn't like he had any clean clothes he could put on. Unlike the room he had been using for the past few years in the penthouse, with its fully stocked closet and drawers. Here, with the exception of his forgotten hoodie and a pair of slippers, no other clothes had ever been kept in his roo... Cell. Clean clothes were always delivered with his breakfast and his dirty clothes were placed on the cart with his dirty dishes after breakfast.

As the heat from his shower dissipated, he began shivering so badly he ended up pulling his hoodie and slippers from the end of the bed and put them on for warmth. They didn't help; he was still freezing. Loki ended up curled in a tight ball shivering with his blanket wrapped tightly around him, his despair easily blacker than the oncoming night. He was still awake and shivering come morning; the cold light of dawn may have brightened the room, but did nothing to warm him or lighten his mood.

OoooO

"I am sorry that the conference invitation didn't work out for you sir."

Loki sat on his bunk ignoring the AI.

When Loki didn't respond, the AI continued.

"If I might be allowed to make an observation? Mister Stark is not very used to considering anyone's desires but his own. Which is not to say that Sir can't be very generous with both his time and money when the mood strikes him. But on the whole, he prefers his generosity to be limited to easily achieved purchases, rather than anything that would involve time and effort on his part. It's not so much that he begrudges you your opportunity, but more that he can't bring himself to be as generous with his time and energy as he is with his bank accounts."

Still paying no attention to the AI, Loki eyes remained closed. The book that Doctor Banner had once given him stated that Midgardians believed this lotus position would help them achieve inner serenity.

He snorted mentally. He had centuries of practice finding his inner calm so that he could work complex spells and never, in all that time, had he needed to braid himself and cup his hands just so. However those attempts haven't worked for the last two days he's been trying, due in large part to Jarvis' frequent interruptions trying to placate him. Irritated Loki decided to try meditating in a way that the Midgardian construct should recognize. He was hoping that Jarvis would finally get the hint and quit annoying him with attempts to justify his master's actions. Unfortunately, as Jarvis's attempts had slowed down, the pounding in his temples had increased proportionally.

Loki hated his mortal body's frailty. How anyone on this backwards mud-ball ever got anything done while having to put up with all the mewling complaints of their feeble bodies was a complete mystery to him.

Triggered no doubt by his current line of thought, the pounding in Loki's temples intensified and his heart started racing until he could almost feel it pumping out dull poisons that burned as they flowed through his extremities. The god was frankly desperate to reach a state calmness hoping it would lessen the painful pounding of the veins in his temples. He also wanted to achieve emptiness and so ease the roar of the voices trying to be heard over the background noise of his traitorous body; voices that kept screaming a litany of all the way he had failed over the centuries.

Then both Loki's thoughts and heart stuttered a moment as he stumbled over another consideration.

They weren't all of his failures. Oh no of course not, he was so special he got to keep some in reserve since he didn't remember the obviously epic error of judgment that had landed him here on Midgard in the first place.

He turned that thought over a moment or two, before deciding that there had still been plenty of failures through the centuries for the voices to harangue him about; enough that even the All Father would have been satisfied at the thoroughness of the non-stop jeering.

OoooO

"So, Loki, I understand you may be having some problems with your meds?"

Loki looked up, frowning and more than a bit confused at the sudden intrusion of an only marginally rumpled Doctor Banner in the doorway of his cell. The god hadn't thought he was concentrating that deeply, but he must have been if he hadn't even noticed the inner door to his cell open. He paused in his final review of the document before him, hit the save button and closed the lid of his laptop, setting it aside before eyeing his first visitor since the fight with Stark.

"Doctor Banner? To what do I owe this honor?" Loki asked, calmly moving to sit on the edge of the bed.

Since he was no longer teaching, Loki had reverted to wearing those cheap jersey pants and t-tanks. It wasn't like he had seen anyone he needed to impress in the last six weeks. In fact, he hadn't seen anyone at all as he rode up daily to spend two hours on the roof within his careful proscribed area of movement. Besides which, casual clothes were less expensive to clean and Loki was worried at the rate in which his normal expenses were deducting from the teaching and assistant wages he had banked.

Granted, Loki was still getting some royalty money from previously published books, but that wasn't near enough to cover his expenses; not even with the release of two more fiction books. While they would make him some money from direct sales, they got him nothing from Stark and only a one-time sight unseen preview payment from SHIELD. That preview amount was more than his royalties would most likely make him this year. However even combined, the sums were nowhere near as high as his previous wages from working with Stark, or even his yearly salary from doing laundry. The stress from worrying about his finances often added to the feeling that his head was going to explode.

Loki refused to consider that his migraines were in any way connected to his fight with Stark. Nor were they caused by the news he read on the internet that the foolish mortal had been knocked out of the sky while fighting that maniac Doom person or that he and Ms. Potts might become betrothed again. After all he liked Ms. Potts and had always enjoyed her company.

"So headaches and nausea again?" Bruce asked with a note of genuine concern while peering into Loki's face.

Flinching backwards a bit because he hadn't noticed that Doctor Banner had come so close, the god tried to settle his scattered thoughts. Pressing both palms to his forehead as if that could force back the pain Loki stifled a groan before dropping his hands and looking up at the worried mortal regarding him.

"Why are you here Doctor Banner?"

OoooO

While he hadn't thought so at the time, Banner's visit turned out to be a blessing... a mixed blessing, but still. The man had dispensed news along with his relief. Stark's injuries while fighting had been minor, so minor compared to the total destruction of his suit, that SHIELD had tried to haul him in to do extensive testing. Knowing Stark's opinion of SHIELD, Loki hadn't needed Banner to tell him that this had triggered a major power struggle between the billionaire hero and the organization he occasionally worked for. Stark of course refused, fighting with both Fury and the Avenger's nominal leader, Steve Rogers, who also thought he should be tested. None of the other Avengers were aware that the rune was anything more than a tattoo, except for Banner, and even he wasn't privy to all the protections it granted to Stark. And apparently Stark didn't want them to start asking questions about his unexplained healing abilities, so he left the country for a while.

According to Banner, the estrangement between Stark and Shield had an upside, at least for Stark Industries. The engineer was currently accompanying Ms. Potts on an extended slate of European meetings, no doubt to keep out of SHIELD's easy reach; none of which Loki allowed himself to care about since he was still determined to get back at Stark for being such a hypocritical bacraut.

Loki slid a sidelong glance towards Banner, the doctor's concern for his health, his mental health, might just help since he was convinced that the solitary nature of Loki's last several weeks was contributing to this minor relapse. Jarvis apparently concurred in his absent master's place.

It took three days before Loki allowed Banner and Jarvis to persuade him to at least start teaching his classes again. Those three days, coupled with the relief that Banner's medication gave him, allowed Loki to finish up his current project and stealthily download it on to one of his flash drives so it would be ready the moment he saw an opportunity.

OoooO

Loki didn't go anywhere without his messenger bag. Even when he was taking a shower, his computer was packed and the bag's handles were within reach. So he was more than ready only a few weeks later when an opportunity presented itself.

Benjamin Ramirez, from Cornell University, was one of the add-on students in his latest class. Watching closely, Loki decided that Ramirez was as good a candidate as he was likely to find. The sociable, dark haired young man seemed to have the requisite disdain for authority that the god was looking for and was friendly enough when they spoke during lesson breaks. While Loki was roaming the room during an exercise on the third day of class, he paused and peered down at the young man's work.

In addition to being a skilled practitioner of magic as an adult, Loki had also, as a youngling, mastered Slægð. He had become so skilled that many had mistaken his youthful sleight of hand displays for acts of real Seiðr, which he hadn't at that time mastered. So he certainly wasn't concerned that anyone, not even Jarvis, would detect the flash drive and ten gram gold piece he slipped into Ramirez's hand while pointing out a possible problem with the young man's work. Loki smiled down at the brief startled look Ramirez gave him and was pleased to see a small smile bloom on the young man's face.

He was more than pleased Friday, while everyone was saying goodbye, to have the same flash drive and a small scrap of paper tucked into his own hand during the class wrap-up good-byes.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a **Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.** They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **summerlove_jls**. Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Not all publicity is good publicity

Chapter Summary

Tony's chickens come home to roost and Jarvis give geographical advice.

Chapter Notes

Just in case you are wondering.... I do like fan art. So please... feel free to be creative here if that is your talent. Lots of good stuff to work with here.

Or if you're really artistic and would like to do some art while getting an advanced scoop on what's going to be in Queens Grace 2 I would be thrilled to chat with you. rennemichaels@hotmail.com

Anyhooooo, big chapter as promised 8445 words. Please enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 48 – Not all publicity is good publicity

“Stark, Ms Potts.” Fury’s words were not so much a cordial greeting, but more like a resigned acknowledgement of a bad rash. A condition that irritated the hell out of the Director of SHIELD, something that Fury had to live with... At least until he could think of a way to eradicate it once and for all. His tone and facial expression leaving no doubt in anyone’s mind however, that he was pretty unhappy about the fact whole having to ‘live with it’ part.

“Nick baby!” Tony crowed, amusement and dark delight, layering his voice as he plonked a sloshing wineskin in front of the glowering director. “We brought presents! And of course we didn’t forget you Hill,” He assured the brunette sitting clenched jawed beside Fury as he placed two gaudily decorated lace trimmed fans trimmed in front of her. “Spain was wonderful. They have the neatest shit there. One is for you and the other is for Coulson, but I figured I give both fans to you so you could have the first pick. Why should Phil get all the perks just because his operation to surgically remove all emotions was more successful than yours? We love you too you know, even if Phil is prettier.”

“Tony behave will you?” Pepper chided, but then smiled radiantly at him, so Tony knew he wasn’t yet anywhere near the limits of her patience. “Director Fury? Agent Hill? To what do we owe the honor of having you grace Stark International Bonn with your presence?”

“Well since you don’t take my calls these days I figured I would visit in person. I wanted to speak-”

“You know while you’re in the neighborhood Nick you should update your outfit. Not that there is anything wrong with the leather fantasy get-up you’re wearing now.” Tony raised his hands placatingly, the conciliatory gesture totally at odds with the signature Stark Smirk that was curling the corners of the industrialist’s mouth. “Maybe freshen it up a bit with a new coat or something.”

He ignored Fury's narrowing glare. "Anyhow there is this really great leather fetish shop in Köln on Händelstr you really should check out. They do wonderful custom work. It's only about fifteen minutes from here."

"Tony." Pepper snapped warningly.

"And they do the smoothest softest leather handcuffs I have ever found." Tony went on as if he hadn't heard the warning to behave in Pepper's voice. "I've bought several pairs. Pepper especially likes the fur-lined ones." He slid a mischievous look over at his CEO, enjoying the wild flush that rose on her cheeks.

"I'll be sure to pass your recommendations on to our quartermaster Stark. In the meantime if it wouldn't be too much trouble can I ask when you intend to return to New York?"

"Awww. Pep he misses me, isn't that sweet?"

"Actually I don't. But I do wonder how it is that you lost control of your contract while you've been gallivanting all over Europe." He nailed the bemused Tony with a hard stare before one side of Fury's mouth tipped up in an unfriendly grin. "Coming to visit you in person when you've just been schooled is one of the few perks of this job I enjoy. And how is it that I am the one bringing this to your attention? Could it be that the great Tony Stark is slipping?"

OoooO

Tony was pissed. Okay, he was amused too, but he was mostly pissed, really, really pissed. Apparently his Hot Norse God of Sneakiness was pretty big on revenge.

Like he shouldn't have already realized that. Which he did. Realize that Loki was a vengeful bastard that is. He certainly didn't need Pepper to repeatedly point out to him.

His CEO was positively no help. Pepper wished that Stark Industries had gotten a prior look at the paper Loki had presented by proxy. However when he let slip about refusing to allow Loki to attend the conference as an invited speaker, she told him that he deserved everything that had happened to him. Even the book.

Fury was pretty much undecided about what enraged him most. Alien knowledge being passed out to all and sundry or that a supposed powerless prisoner could run an end game around someone as paranoid about security as Stark. The major public relations hit that the Avengers would be taking due to Stark allowing his prisoner to have any tech that Stark himself did not directly supervise and control or Tony pissing off an advanced knowledge base. He was even having a hard time deciding which to yell about first. And Hill was definitely not the balm to sooth troubled Directors that Coulson would have been.

"Did it ever occur to you that we might need to play nice with the big brained alien so we can get as much info as possible before his Space Viking Daddy hauls his sorry ass home?" Fury growled.

"Oh, now you want to play nice? Before you were perfectly willing to stick him in a cage to rot." Tony retorted. "You already owe me that you got any info out of him at all."

"No. If anyone, we owe Jarvis and Potts for that."

"Yeah? Well I designed one and hired the other. So I still get credit." And no he was not being petulant; he was totally owed a lot of the credit there. Okay Pepper and Jarvis may have set up the conditions that allowed Loki to publish... However Tony was the one that her Queenliness approached to take care of baby boy Odinson in the first place.

Leaving Pepper, Fury and Hill to fuss over the public relation nightmare that was the book, Tony tuned them out and turned his attention to the Intel that Coulson had passed him from that Fritz-Simmons team.

How Loki had managed to get information out of Stark tower was what was bugging everyone. So yeah, Loki had non-Stark controlled tech, which maybe wasn't the greatest idea to allow... But fuck it made the guy happy and it wasn't like he was using it to log in anywhere covertly. Fury could scream all he wanted about how Stark did not have a tight rein on the god, but honestly felons in prison sometimes had more freedom of movement than the Trickster had. His floor was secure. The elevator he used to go to the roof and his classes was secure. The roof terrace was of course secure and the rear door of the private elevator opened directly to a secure training suite that housed Loki's personal class room. When Tony wasn't in residence the god didn't go to any other areas of the building, not even the rest rooms, returning to his own floor if he needed to use the facilities. Hell he'd been warned not to go within five feet of the classroom door that opened to the main corridor of the training suites.

"So Stark, you two come up with any answers on how he did it?" Fury growled, interrupting Tony's review of the files Jarvis was tossing up on his laptop and breaking his concentration.

"You know none of this would have happened if you hadn't been bugging me," Tony sniped disgustedly, closing down the file he was looking through. "I do have my private doctor you know. More than one even."

Hill put a hand to her ear, listening intently.

"Tony present in Europe is going to be a big boost for our EU productivity." Pepper beamed at Fury. "So I certainly appreciated it. Any time you want to start another power struggle with him that you're not going to win please, let me know ahead of time so I don't have to come up with a tour schedule for him at the last minute."

"We'll see what we can do," Fury said, with a smile that was more a promise of painful things to come than anything else.

"Sir, Stark Tower security is detaining our agents at the lobby level."

Fury's false smile vanished when Hill spoke and his lips pursed tightly while he glared at the ceiling from under lowered brows as if he was looking for the strength not to pull out a pistol and shoot the billionaire in front of him. "Stark," He said in a carefully controlled tone, "Tell Jarvis to let my damn agents into your tower so that we can do a search and try to plug this leak."

"Yeah. No." Tony said, glancing quickly at Pepper before he gave the irritated man across from him a playful smirk. "Maybe tomorrow morning Nicky. I want to talk to Flawed Design first. And maybe have my own security take a peek. I mean he is my contract right?"

"We might sue him for breach of contract."

"Well you can certainly try." Tony allowed with faux thoughtfulness. "But I am pretty sure he thought of that. Hell, just off the top of my head I know that there is a difference between publishing something commercially and releasing a concept paper for peer review." Tony shrugged. "Not that I've done it in decades mind you, but I do remember how it works."

The two men looked at each other for a moment. While Tony maintained a light humorous expression that he was in no way feeling, Fury was glaring at him like he had found several bio-presents from an under-trained puppy of no particular breeding.

Just before Fury could respond, Tony continued.

“Look Nick, just have your people send me what they have and we’ll try to figure out what happened. I’ll get in touch with you the minute I have something.”

They studied each other for a moment.

“Okay?”

Tony endured another baleful look before Fury growled, “Go home Stark, get this shit straightened out. I don’t want anything else released unless we know about it. It looks like the lead time on this latest paper of his will be more long-range, but honestly the best people I can get access to aren’t really sure. What happens if he takes it into his head to release a Dilithium Crystals for Dummy’s or a Do it yourself guide to Higgs Boson particles?”

“Whoa. Nick. Pretty funny. You come up with those examples by yourself or did Coulson ghost write them for you?”

And then, right before his eyes, the director of SHIELD sagged and blew out a long-suffering sigh. “Go home Stark. Keep an eye on him. This paper is going to remind people that there is another ground breaking genius around. Hell. We want as much alien research as we can get, but not at the price of risking war with Asgard because some nutjob like Doom tries a snatch or an assassination attempt by some foreign power worried about the states getting a jump on them.”

Tony shrugged, “I’d like to Nick, but someone keeps trying to make a lab rat out of me.”

“We know you were tinkering with Extremis for Potts, but this takes precedence over trying to figure out what the fuck you’ve done to yourself. Go home. Babysit your Space Brat.”

“Well I’ll think about it,” Tony drawled, keeping a tight rein on his jubilation at finally getting back to his labs, his robots and his cranky but never boring god. If only to see what said robots had damaged, make love to his coffee machines and to have the pleasure of strangling his troublemaking slanderous god’s ass. “But... Pep has some big plans for me here in Germany, I might want to stay here. And besides, I haven’t talked her into letting me try out those new leather handcuffs I bought yet. So I might need to stick around.”

There was a delicate but still very audible snort of disbelief. “Like that is going to happen,” said Pepper under her breath.

“Or you can try them out on me.” Tony said wagging his eyebrows and giving her a big grin, “I’m good either way.”

Paying no attention to Tony going off on another tangent, Fury and Hill stood up. “Go home Stark. I’ll give you tomorrow to travel, but I want some answers by Wednesday.” A sly grin stole across his face. “Oh, and for your information everyone on the bridge crew can’t wait to read the new book. The word from the agents who have already downloaded it is very... Enthusiastic.”

“That and I’ve also heard it described as a total Stark Smack down sir,” Hill interjected.

“Apparently the characterizations are dead on and the situations described are... Well dubiously adventurous to say the least.”

“So they say.” Fury gave Tony a creepy smirk, “And while Loki isn’t an Amanda Hockings yet, *‘The Avenging Metal Man - Science, Super Heroes and Hot Sex’* is definitely making some major waves for a self-published book. Its Amazon Best Sellers Rank just dropped below ten thousand. Not too shabby when you consider it was over twenty-two thousand yesterday.”

Yeah, so maybe Tony did need to go home and see what other trouble Wack Job God might be getting into. One good thing was that Fury wouldn't have to worry about some random super villain or rouge government trying to kill Loki. Because Tony was pretty sure from the smugness that was oozing off the recently departed SHIELD agents that once he got his hand on a copy of Loki's latest book, he was going to want to kill the god himself.

OoooO

"You got what you deserved Tony. Just be careful when you talk to him. If this is his version of retaliation, I'd hate to find out what Loki's escalation ratio entails." Pepper warned rubbing the center of her forehead with two long fingers trying to prevent a migraine from lodging there. "And Jarvis, you know better than this, next time, you should call me the minute that Tony starts a pissing match with an ancient trickster god."

"Well Mister Odinson did want to contact you, but Sir wouldn't give me permission to put the calls through and when he tried again later, Sir told me that the matter was finished and not to mention it again. I did try Ms. Potts."

"Oh nice Jarvis. Rat me out to Pep why don't you."

"Tony, tell Jarvis that he is never to block a call to me from Loki. No matter what the reason."

"But Pep," Tony whined.

"Tony!"

"Fine!" Tony said, sullenly grabbing his overnight bag and giving his aggravated CEO a wide berth as he headed towards the door. "You heard her Jarvis, never block a call from Mister Mistoffelees if he wants to call Pepper." He ducked out of the suite and shut the door behind him before Pepper could yell at him for anything else.

OoooO

"I understand that you have your panties in a wad Spangles, but I'm busy right now. I'll call you back later."

"Yes I've talked to Fury, and yes I know he's upset. But hey, when isn't he? It's like his base state you know."

"It doesn't have anything to do with New York that was his *'birth'* state."

"It's not a state state, it's a reliable starting point used in... You know what? It's not important. I love you Steve but I'm hanging up now."

"No. I know the guy who wrote it and trust me it has nothing to do with me rejecting his advances. Perhaps the other way, not that I ever *'really'* get shot down. Gorgeous genius billionaire you know."

"Well if Clint told you who wrote it, then why are you calling me?"

"So?"

"Look Grandpa Rogers, just between you and me, I might be a guy but that doesn't mean I'm blind. Loki's crazy, okay. No argument there. But he's also smart, has legs that go on for miles, cheek bones you could shave with and is so hot that he could melt titanium. Oh and banging him

would allow me to check ‘Nailed a God’ off my bucket list, so yes, I was interested in hitting that.”

“Because he wasn’t as flattered as he should have been that I was interested... And because he is a vindictive psycho bitch who can write compelling hardcore porn. Therefore, it sucks to be me right now doesn't it?”

“How should I know? Perhaps he likes ‘em big, dumb and blonde. You should come over for lunch one day and maybe we’ll find out.”

“Yeah well I'm a little busy trying to think how he wormed his way around SHIELD’s, not to mention my, surveillance. So I’m sure you’ll understand why I am hanging up on you now. No. I’ve got work to do.”

“Don’t care. Nope. Not going to talk anymore.”

“Whatever Capsicle. Talk at ya later.”

OoooO

It had taken Jarvis, Tony, several SHIELD security techs and a few field agents almost the entirety of his long flight back to the States to find out how Loki had gotten around Tony’s security. Fury had suspected magic; Tony had expected a high-tech crack. But instead it was apparently a few bribes and a low-key hand off to a sleeper acquaintance named Morgan Hayes that Loki had somehow met a few years ago.

The Hayes acquaintance was so under the table that the only reason they found her was because she allowed herself to be found. The minute that SHIELD had showed up at her office, she sent a text to a lawyer friend of hers from college. She then demanded that the agents escorting her should meet her lawyer friend before heading to the local SHIELD office for a video conference. Something that she would not have been able to get away with if they’d sent her a Coulson caliber agent, as opposed to the midrange functionary that was picked because he was physically the closest.

Tony hated working with second tier staff, but more so he hated that such a low tech work method had succeeded, despite all the ways he had of keeping tabs on the god. He had even privately ranted to Jarvis to keep looking because there was no fucking way it had happened like this.

“Are you afraid he might have been smarter than you sir?” Jarvis had asked after they had wasted another hour looking for other points of contact. And didn’t that just hack Tony off even more.

“Okay, first off Jarvis, nobody is smarter than me. You should know that. I’ve hard coded it to your system for crying out loud. Second... Well... It’s all Pepper’s fault. She’s the one who told me to pull back. Otherwise I ‘*might*’ have gone to that damn conference of his. But no. I was being good and look where it got me.”

“You do realize that denial is not a waterway flowing through the Sahara Basin don’t you Sir?”

“Fuck you Jarvis.”

“As mature as always Sir.”

OoooO

Still wearing the suit that he’d put on the day before in Germany, now very much worse for the wear, Tony made it to his tower just before lunch. When Loki, dressed in his normal class room

attire of glossy black shoes, dark charcoal suit, white shirt and a grey and black patterned tie entered his floor for lunch, he found Tony waiting in the security lobby.

With both hands deep in his pockets, Tony was sitting on a bench just outside the small emergency apartment he had built years ago for those times when Loki had to vacate the penthouse for a day or two. Loki would stay there when Tony was playing host to high profile visitors or when Thor was present for various reasons, like visiting Jane or his yearly trip to renew Tony's rune. Not that Loki had known about Thor's visits.

"Ooo Stark," Loki exited the elevator, scrunching up his face making him look more adorable than anyone who caused this much trouble should be able to look. "To what do I owe the honor?"

The god's voice was low and throaty and as always, that damn accent seemed to dance along every nerve group in the billionaire's body.

"Heh." Despite the tingle in troublesome places of his anatomy, Tony's wide smile wasn't reflected in his eyes. "You tell me. I'm pretty sure you know why I'm here."

"Now Stark, where would the fun be in that." The god said silkily as he fucking breezed past Tony with only a sidelong glance. Loki's normal cat-like grace, all smooth and slinky turned into a deliberate strut as he headed towards the door leading to the high security area surround his cell that took up the bulk of the floor.

"Stop." Tony's tone wasn't loud, but it was certainly a commanding.

Loki's turned, his brows furled together, before a completely haughty look took over. "Stop?" He queried incredulously.

"You, my friend, have been a very bad boy." Tony said, holding out his hand for the messenger bag that Loki was carrying. "Hand it over."

Head tilted at a questioning angle, Loki took a step back towards Tony. The engineer could almost see the various calculations and clever scenarios running through the god's thoughts.

Tony made 'gimmie' hands.

"Hand it over Rudolf."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Yeah you do. 'The Avenging Metal Man - Science, Super Heroes and Hot Sex' and that little Ferroelectrics and Anti-Ferroelectrics gem you proxy presented at for the American Physical Society southeast conference?"

Loki looked like he intended to retort but stopped when he saw that Tony was not in the mood to play games. Expressionless he held out the bag, releasing it to Tony without further comment.

"You have been a very, very, very bad god." Tony said as he opened the messenger bag and began unloading the contents. "And bad gods who bring Fury down on me and have him dissing my security arrangements do not get to keep unsecured laptops even if they are wifi disabled. Or flash drives," Tony said naming each item he removed and placed on the bench beside him. "Gold bullion? You carry all of it with you? Really? You just couldn't use cash?"

Loki rolled his eyes. "You don't understand Stark. People are very inclined to accept less when the form of payment is so pretty."

“And untraceable?”

A wide smile flashed across the god’s face. “Well yes, that also,” he said eye’s alight with mischief.

Tony gave him an annoyed look and flipped open the protective pouch in his hand, “a digital camera, a--” The engineer stopped, picked the pouch back up from where he had placed it on the bench. Opening it, he pulled out a small camera looking device. “Seriously Merlin? A smart phone with a snap on case designed to look like a camera and some peel off decals? Who did you think this would fool?”

“Well Jarvis for one, since the pouch is a soft side Faraday cage and I never took it out of the pouch not even to charge it. Naturally I never made any phone calls or sent any messages from it while I was in the tower.” Loki said, pardonably smug. He briefly glanced at the ceiling and shrugged, “Sorry.”

“Oh very clever sir.” Jarvis replied, seemingly more pleased than he should have been with what Tony considered a major breach of his security protocols.

Tony snapped the front protective cover off. “An iPhone? You brought a disguised iPhone into my tower? That’s almost worse than getting me in trouble with Fury and Pepper. Jarvis it’s an iPhone!”

“Now that was very wrong of you Mister Odinson,” Jarvis said with more than a note of censure. “You know how Sir feels about iPhones.”

“Irrationally jealous?”

“Indeed.”

“Jarvis!” Tony snapped, shooting a black look at Jarvis’ nearest camera.

“Well sir you do continually obsess about--”

“Zip it Jarvis.”

The AI did indeed ‘Zip It’, but a put upon sigh wafted out of the speakers.

Tony did the preliminary search of Loki’s messenger bag while the god leaned against the still open door leading to the security area and his waiting lunch. Granted, everything would be more thoroughly examined in his lab but he’d wanted an idea of just what the sneaky bastard had been up to right under his nose. Not that he had honestly would have given a shit if it hadn’t been for the whole book thing. After all, it had been years since the god had given him his sworn Asgardian word that he wouldn’t use runes without Tony’s knowledge or kill anyone. Which he hadn’t, so frankly that was pretty much the extent of the fucks Tony gave on the matter.

Except for the book. That the engineer was major bent about. Fuck it all, he’d been so careful to keep that part of his life totally on the down low and now he’s looking at a possible frickin’ best seller on the topic. Okay, so maybe not a best seller or anything that mentions his name, but it’s still a public relations hit he doesn’t need. Metal Man? Toby Snark? Billionaire Industrialist pervert who after a near fatal attack by one of his own creations decides that making high quality innovative sex toys is more socially responsible than the military androids he originally made his fortune producing? Call him unreasonable, but when Tony Stark gets the public’s panties in an uproar, he would like to at least be the one doing the deed... He doesn’t want some frickin’ crazy god taking it upon himself to use a PR disaster as payback for his supposed transgressions against said god.

And besides... Not that he's a girl or anything... But after three freaking months of Loki not talking to him, this is how not he thought their next meeting would be going. And it kinda almost really makes him wants to cry. But he doesn't because then Tony knows he would be the girl in this weird bromantic frenemies relationship he and Loki have going on.

Or rather had.

Until the god of entitlement got pissy with him.

Loki continued to lean against the door frame and watch as Tony searched the rest of the bag. The only other items in the damn thing were just standard crap, pens, notepads, condoms, a bag of hard candy, some cash and strangely enough a Metro Card with three months left on it. Popa-stoppers and an untraceable cash free way to move around the city. Apparently Trickster Gods and the Boy Scouts shared that whole 'Be Prepared' motto.

Who the fuck did he get all this stuff from? Yeah, Tony had kinda ignored the laptop since it had no wifi capabilities. However he was fairly sure the high-end digital camera he remembered Jarvis ordering for Loki had been a real camera, not a prepaid cellphone with camera fakery snapped on its front. Sweeping everything back into the bag, Tony closed it sitting the bag on the bench beside him before tiredly getting to his feet.

"I still can't believe you threatened to piss in my elevator you know."

Loki eyes slid away from his and a touch of color rose in his cheeks. "Actually I threatened to do worse. A bit on the childish side I agree..." He trailed off before he sought Tony's gaze and lifted his chin unapologetically. "But I do try to tailor the maturity level of my threats to the audience."

Tony head twitched a bit at the acknowledgement of a hit.

"You know Fury wants to go after you for breach of contract right?" he asked, shoving his hands into his pants pockets and arching his spine and shoulders to relieve the tension in them. Loki straightened regarding him dispassionately, waiting a moment to see if Tony had anything else to add.

A long moment later when Tony remained silent he responded. "Breach of contract? He has no case Stark. But if Fury feels differently, by all means tell him to take what legal action he deems necessary. I am also aware of the rules governing the wrongful use of civil proceedings," The god finally said. "In the end, I believe you will both find that your agreements are limited to any book that I publish with LSWalker. If you check you will see that neither I, nor LSWalker published this book. Hevnernsott Publishing, the publisher of record is, as you know, a small vanity publisher owned by a very courageous young lady named Morgan Hayes."

"Yeah. Revenge is Sweet Publishing? By the way, clever name there Blitzen."

Loki nodded his head in acceptance of the compliment.

"So," Tony continued, "You didn't publish it, you merely authored it? That's your out is it?"

"Oh Stark, I always leave myself an out. There was nothing in either agreement prohibiting me from being an author of books published by others or of submitting technical papers to peer review."

"Slander?"

"Ah." Loki's nose wrinkled up in what in other circumstances would have been an adorable smirk.

"I rather think 'The Avenging Metal Man' will be regarded as a parody which is protected under the law, being a work created to mock, comment on or trivialize its subject. As you know Stark, I am all about the mocking."

"Damn it Loki! I trusted you!" Tony burst out after several moments of them staring at each other. His voice much huskier than he would have liked. And he had. Against all odds he had trusted the god.

Mask of disdain firmly in place, Loki sneered down at him, "What would you have me do Stark? My options were rather limited."

"I *'would have you do'* nothing thank you very much!" Tony hissed furiously jaw tight as he crossed his arms and moved into the god's personal space.

"Oh really?" Loki's drawl was laden with scorn and disbelief in equal measure. "I wonder if it had occurred the other way around... What would the great Toby Snark have done in my place?"

"Made your life--"

A living hell. Ah fuck no. There is no way he was going to agree with him.

"Well? What would you have done Stark?" Loki demanded.

They stared at each other for a moment.

"I'd have accepted it and moved on." Tony said finally.

"You are as poor a liar as you are friend." The god scoffed. "You and I both know that you wouldn't have been happy until you had torn this tower down around my ears in revenge." Loki stepped back through the door way. Tony followed him, maintaining his distance from the god just this side of too close. "I thought I would be a bit less violent, and this is the thanks I get."

"God damnit to hell Loki. What the fuck were you thinking to write that crap!"

"Are you embarrassed Stark? You have sex in public venues with people you don't even know and a book that doesn't even mention your name embarrasses you?"

Exasperated Tony rolled his eyes, "Well yeah. I mean you wrote that I was a deviant pervert and a switch hitter." Tony would have said more, but the utter smugness now rolling off of the god in front of him caused further words to catch in his throat.

"By all means, please tell me what thing I wrote that you have never done." Eyes alight with amusement and shaking his head Loki dropped his jaw in a large opened mouthed grin, obviously gleeful that he had bested *'Tony Fucking Stark'* against some very steep odds. "In fact tell me anything I wrote that you personally did not boast to me about."

Tony really, really hated when people used his own stupidity against him. But it was ten times worse when they had the nerve to taunt him about with a wide manic smile.

And the bastard wondered why Asgard hated him. If the god was gleefully out witting a *'genius'* when he was a prisoner with no magic, then Loki had to have been insufferable when he was chock full of fairy mojo and going up against your average *'might is right'* sword swinging Space Viking. Although if Tony was honest with himself, something he really hated being, then Tony would have to admit he had really screwed the pooch this time. There is no way the engineer shouldn't have known better than pull a power play against a being ten times more experienced

with a nasty reputation for being a creative problem solver. Especially over something so trivial, hell he could have sent the god to the damn conference with his own SI security and SHIELD as his babysitter. *If* he had wanted Loki out in public without him, which admittedly he didn't.

"And as for the other, you have been panting after me for years." The god continued shifting effortlessly into disdain. "Your latent tendencies are not as well hidden as you think Stark; so you might as well face them. It isn't like those close to you and the more astute members of the media aren't aware of or at the very least strongly suspect them. "

"Yeah? Well let me tell you, there is a big damn difference between suspect and laid out for them in black and white by someone who fucking knows me." Tony snapped calling on the arrogance of his inner Stark to hide whatever regrets he might be having at being so brain-dead in his dealings with the god. Fortunately his inner Stark was more than up for the challenge going so far as to point out to him the numerous occasions when said god had cozied up to him in a more than friendly manner. Certainly in ways that Rhodney never would have.

Granted Loki had usually been trying to get a rise out of Clint, SHIELD or someone at they wanted to mess with... But still all that cooing, stroking and nuzzling had all, in fact been done by the sanctimonious deity who was now glaring at him.

"It's not like you've never given me any encouragement." Tony pointed out acidly.

Loki froze a moment before menacingly advancing to close the already small space between the two men, anger burning in his eyes.

"Exactly how weak do you think I am Stark?" He hissed.

"Whoa!" Tony exclaimed putting his hands up placatingly and taking a step back. "I never said a word about you being weak."

"Of course not Stark, because being sexually submissive to your jailor is a sign of strength, isn't it?" Loki's spat while clenching hands held rigidly held down at his sides. "Besides being such a mentally healthy thing to do isn't it? Honestly Stark, what did you really expect!?"

There was a really awkward silence since Tony couldn't think of anything he could say without getting his ass rightfully handed to him.

The god's lip curled up on one corner.

"Oh Stark! Yes!" Loki mimed the breathless cadence from every overly dramatic chick flick orgasm that Tony has ever had to endure watching. "Even though you will never be able to know if I truly care about you or if I am just using your affection to gain more freedom... Please, please take me!"

And then a heartbeat later the god's lips pressed into a thin, hard line and dangerously narrowed green eyes pinned Tony in place.

Tony was stunned, but in a typical Tony Fucking Stark fashion, his mind skittered away from the main issue that he didn't want to face and focused on fact that Tony knew... Knew that Loki 'God of Mischief' Odinson was a major diva who had missed his calling as an actor. Screw the younger prince, wizard bit, the god was born to be an actor. Anyone who could turn off the furious like he was shutting off a faucet, segue into 'When Harry Met Sally in a Diner' and then slide right back into incensed without missing a beat, was a thespian of the first freaking order.

Whereas Tony was so shocked he almost forgot to breathe, whatever Loki was dealing with

apparently didn't allow him to get enough air no matter how hard he was breathing. The god was hauling in oxygen like he had just finished a marathon.

"Pathetic!" The god spat angrily, finally getting enough control to allow him to break the silence. "Could I not have published a cleverly worded insider's look at where Stark Industries is headed in the next five years? Make no mistake Stark, without running afoul of your realms disclosure laws I could have done so if I wished to. Am I not already collaborating with you in other areas that benefit you and your company? And yet you continually pressed for something I can't give you! Something that according to you my others jailers have taken with force even if I no longer remember what happened! What did you honestly expect to happen Stark?!"

Sadly, unable to ignore or deflect the real issue any longer, color flooded Tony's cheeks even as his heart dropped. So maybe he hadn't exactly realized what this might have looked like from the other side. And thoughtless though he might be, he certainly didn't want to be lumped in Loki's mind with any Asgardian rapists that had assaulted the god while he was in Viking land.

Even if Loki didn't remember the actual circumstances.

Okay, so maybe Tony Stark didn't do shame, but he could feel chagrin. Really, really deep chagrin. The hand that he ran through his short brown hair possibly wasn't as steady as it could have been. Tony closed his eyes for the smallest of moments trying to push back against the sick distress that his '*chagrin*' was causing.

"Fine. I get it, maybe that wasn't the greatest impulse that I've ever followed..." The engineer took a deep breath, holding it for a moment to steady himself before continuing, "but I did think that you were my friend! Or was that all an act?"

"Really Stark? A friend?" Face twisted in a parody of consideration, Loki pondered this statement and from the sour face he pulled, the god obviously found it lacking. "Well I don't know much about that, but I would never have dismissed an opportunity for one of my friends to gain recognition in their field. I rather think I would have celebrated it, not tried to make it impossible for them to achieve. So apparently you have a very different, a very self-centered, very hurtful idea of what a friend is. Perhaps you should get Thor to introduce you to his idiot companions Sif and the Warriors Three; you would fit right in with them."

And that is when Tony fled, leaving Jarvis to deal with putting Loki away. Making today's difficulty no different from any other day of his life; Tony made a mess and then left it for others to cleanup. It had taken a while, but Tony's personality failings had finally won him a trifecta. He was a bad boss to his company, a bad lover as Pepper and his many failed relationships testified and after years of self-comforting justification he finally had to admit was that he was a bad friend.

OoooO

During the call he made to Fury the next morning, an exhausted Tony didn't mention his previous day's epiphany that he was a dick of a friend, but he did answer a few questions that yesterday's findings had brought up. Yawning, Tony leaned back against the kitchen counter and ruffled his hair. It was days like this that made Tony wish he was just a normal engineer. In which case the only thing he would be worried about right now was that he was two hours late for work.

"It's not like he had any credit cards Nick, so he always takes a wad of cash with him when we go out. For an emergency or if he sees something he wants. How the hell was I supposed to know he was siphoning some off every time and saving it for a subversive day."

"And here I thought someone told me you were a genius Stark."

“Yeahhhh, they did. But maybe they should have also mentioned that he was one too. And while I will deny I ever said this to my dying day... Rudolf is not only a genius in his own right... But he has also got centuries more experience fucking over powerful people than you, me and SHIELD combined.

Fury huffed into the phone. “Maybe someone should have thought about that before they pissed him off.”

“A valid point that I cannot argue with. I'd really like to, but I can't.” The billionaire conceded. “In fact I have told Jarvis to work that into my weekly reminder rotation. But I also do want to point out that other ‘someones’ gave him a sack full of gold, which he has been very sneakily spreading around to make himself a little ‘under the radar’ network of contacts.”

Not that he seemed to have any intentions of doing anything with them. That was the part that surprised Tony. When the engineer had later called him and pressed for answers of why? The main response Tony got was that someday Loki might need them. The god looked so many moves ahead that he put Fischer and Kasparov to shame.

And neither Tony nor SHIELD were laboring under any delusions that Hayes was the god’s only outside contact. Hell, the woman admitted that she hadn’t covered her trail and that Loki had advised her to use the situation to her advantage. Worse, they still didn’t know how or when he had contacted her to release the book.

“We had no idea you were going to let him run around town with the gold.” Fury replied. Tony could hear him irritably tapping on his desk. “You are going to take steps to make sure this doesn’t happen again I hope.”

“Yeah, I have it all, but he’s already promised to make my life a living hell with Pepper if I try to convert his gold to dollars and stick it in his bank account. So, I’m going to send it to his mother at the end of the month and let her worry about it.” Tony’s blue Suicidal Tendencies t-shirt rode up as he stretched. “He’s getting a credit and a debit card and never any more than twenty dollars of mugger cash at a time.”

Or at least that is what Tony planned if the god ever forgave him enough to speak to him without Jarvis or Pepper as an intermediary.

“Mugger cash? Does this mean you are going to resume crawling around New York with a psychotic god in tow again? I thought you two broke up?”

“Naw. I just had to take a little trip so I could keep your hands off me. No offence Nick but you are so not my type.” Tony let a little note of amusement bleed into his voice, not that he was feeling any. Mostly he was just getting a bit tired of Nick and his pot-shots. Okay more than a bit tired actually. Nick, SHIELD, the World Security Council, they can all blow him for all Tony cares. They only time he ever heard from the bastards was when they want him to do something, when they wanted to take or use something of his or when they want to yell at him for stuff that isn't his fault.

Mostly not his fault anyway.

Frankly Tony is getting a bit fed up of SHIELD. Strike that, there's no 'getting' about it, they flat piss him off these days. And it isn’t like they don’t know it, lord knows he told them often enough. After all, it hadn’t been that long after Loki had arrived that Tony had put himself on restricted duty while getting ready for his heart operation. Something he has never regretted. The story fed to the press concerned his health issues necessitating a scale back of Iron Man activities. So he now

limited his activities to New York City or the *'end of the world as we know it'*... Not that the latter has occurred since Tall, Dark and Crazy's first visit. Not that he had health issues anymore. Again something SHIELD didn't need to know.

However it seemed no matter what he did or said SHIELD refused to understand that he is not one of their minions. He was Tony Fucking Stark and even as a consultant he doesn't answer to anyone. Which was why it really did piss him off that he gets a call or visit from SHIELD almost weekly attempting to reel him back into active duty, whine at him for a tech fix or threaten him with forfeiture of his patents or the imminent confiscation of his suits for no other reason than SHIELD feels entitled to a share of anything Howard Stark owned.

Including his unloved son.

"What?" Tony asks, having completely lost the thread of the conversation.

"Stark are you listening to me?" Fury demanded causing Tony to sigh loudly.

"I'm trying not to Nick but you just won't shut up."

"Look, you may not be a full time Avenger anymore, but we're still not wild about you creating any PR problems that will mess up our funding. Do you want us to squash this Hayes for you and get her to stop distributing the book? Or are you taking care of it?"

And in the end it always came down to that, Tony fumed. Fury and SHIELD could give a shit less what happened to Tony or his company unless it affected their funding or Tony's ability to pull technical solutions out of his ass for them.

"Please. Don't put yourself out on my account Nicky; I'll handle this my way."

Tony wonders how it is that he can see the sneer curling up one side of Fury's face even before he hears it in his voice.

"See that you do Stark."

OoooO

"So what did she say Jarvis?" Tony asked a few days later while wrestling some carbon build up out of the Mark 22's palm repulsors. He decided not to contact the Hayes kid directly, something he was sure Pepper would be happy about when she found out.

"She has declined to speak with me about it sir as it technically has nothing to do with you. She also has refused several monetary offers to retract the publication stating that if she didn't do it when those government monkeys pressed her, she wasn't going to do it for a paltry cash settlement."

Of course she wouldn't. Tony was pretty sure the bitch had something else in mind. "What did Prince Pain in the Ass have to say about a possible retraction offer?"

"Mister Odinson claimed that the matter was out of his hands, it was up to Ms. Hayes."

"So... How pissed is his highness this morning?" He asked, putting the metal pick he'd been using down and hitting his gauntlet with a blast of compressed air to clean away any left-over residue.

"Actually he seems in quite high spirits Sir. Much more upbeat than he has been since your refusal to allow him to attend the conference."

“I’m sure he is. I bet this is just the ice cream on his revenge cake.”

“Possibly sir, but I think his improved mood might also be linked to several emails he has received asking about his conference publication. He has also received a few requests for interviews.” Jarvis paused a moment. “If I might suggest sir, you might want to facilitate his being interviewed. Such a gesture might allow you both to put the missed conference episode behind you.”

Thoughtfully Tony snapped the retention plates back on his now cleaned repulsor. “And withdrawing the book?” He asked. Not that really expected the god to go along with that, Lord knows he wouldn’t if he had been the one that revenge published it.

“I don’t see why not sir. I would venture to say it has served its purpose. Besides, I dare say Mister Odinson has some other plan up his sleeve that a retraction and a return to your good graces would facilitate. He does so like to get multiple results from his activities.”

That last was a bit of an understatement as far as Tony was concerned. But then Loki wasn’t really the only one. No matter how hard Fury and Rogers had pressed, Tony knew he could have easily continued to evade their attempts to make him get a physical. His own escape to Europe with Pepper was more fleeing the emotional mess he had caused with the god than it was avoiding SHIELD so they didn’t find out about the healing benefit of Frigga’s rune.

Tony thoughtfully rubbed a slightly grubby finger along the line of his goatee. As much as he wanted Loki to get his little girl friend to retract that damn book, that wasn’t the only thing he wanted from the god. Hell it wasn’t even the main thing. “Do you think he’d be willing to come back to the lab and start talking to me again anytime soon?” He asked Jarvis, making sure his tone was casual to the point of disinterested. Not that Jarvis would be fooled by that.

“Well I suggested that he might like to join you and Ms. Potts for brunch on Sunday when she gets home. He agreed only if Ms. Potts was present and only so long as there are Belgium Waffles, loaded hash browns, eggs, bacon and all the trimmings of course.”

“Oh, of course. Because it couldn’t be that he wanted to see us or that he missed us or anything.”

“Indeed Sir. He also did hint that he would be open to resuming lab duties and your previous relationship if you apologized, allowed him to do the requested interviews and swore not to pull, and I quote, *'such a dick move ever again'*.”

“He said that did he?” Tony asked archly, equal parts annoyed and amused at both the highhandedness of the god and his use of one of Tony’s favorite curses. “I wonder what I get in return for all of those concessions.”

“His pledge not to publish a sequel.” Jarvis replied. “Mister Odinson favored me with a brief outline of what he was thinking of for the next book in the series. I earnestly recommend you to accept his terms without haggling sir.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.

They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia & Lavanyalabelle** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Kneel!!

Chapter Summary

Tony lets Loki know he is willing to accommodate him any way he can. The guy doesn't ever learn.

Chapter Notes

Not a big chapter, but I will post again this weekend. Promise... Unless my internet goes out... It's been pretty flaky the last few days due to high winds, heavy rain and what not. Can I just say how it totally sucks to be in an older area with an aging infrastructure? Yes, the area has been established for nigh on a hundred years... Mature trees, stable neighborhoods, but all that means is everything here is fricking OLD! And expensive to for the utility companies to repair and maintain. Oh. Wait... Ranting. My bad.

As I mentioned last update, I do like fan art. So please... feel free to be creative here if that is your talent. I would be honored. [rennemichaels at hot mail dot com](mailto:rennemichaels@hotmail.com) or message me on my new facebook, You will know the correct Renne Michaels when you see my Snow Flake avatar. Nothing much on that page yet, but company is always welcome.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 49 - Kneel!

In the end they did all meet for brunch on Sunday. The engineer had decided to honor the whole Sunday Brunch theme by wearing a pair of grey pinstriped PJ bottoms. The flannel sleepwear was topped with a faded black muscle tank top; Tony's look being completed by worn leather mule slippers and a bad case of bed head. Carol had come in on triple overtime, disappeared into his own kitchen and had everything ready to serve and sitting in the warming oven when Pepper and Loki showed up. Loki had obviously had Minion get him a slim fit light grey button down and some figure hugging black dress slacks from his penthouse wardrobe, while Pepper took advantage of it being Sunday and was positively schlepping around in a royal blue track suit and sneakers.

Tony was amazed at how little time it actually took for the both of them to be comfortable enough to resume the sniping and mock threats that they had previously taken such delight in throwing at each other. After Pepper told him about the final meetings he had missed, the conversation touched on several topics including Loki's upcoming scheduled interviews. Tony and Loki also tossed blame back and forth about the continuing, but hopefully soon stopping, fallout from *the book's* publication. And it was actually pretty funny to find out that the damn book had pained Loki's literary sensitivities as much to write it as the actual publication pained Tony and Stark International to deal with it.

"You know, I'm on to you now," Tony said with a smirk, snagging several pieces of bacon and

crumbling them over his hash browns. “Even if you wrote that sequel you told Jarvis about you wouldn’t be able to publish it.”

“By all means Stark, challenge my ingenuity.” The god said calmly as he carefully spread cherry raspberry compote over heavily buttered Belgium waffles. “And when the sequel gets printed despite your best efforts, Ms. Potts can testify in my behalf that it was done in response to a direct challenge from you. Then you will be the one in trouble with her for the hit to your stock prices and also to your Captain Rogers and Director Fury, not me.”

Pepper’s fork full of omelet paused halfway to her mouth. “Don’t start Tony.” She commanded.

“Seriously Pep, under the same conditions, it just wouldn’t be possible now.” Tony looked at the small secretive smile blossoming across Loki’s face. “What?”

The god used his fork to cut and spear a portion of his waffle before looking up at Tony. “Oh please Stark. Do you really think that was my only contact?” Loki’s eyes crinkled in amusement as he teased the fruit laden waffle off of his fork and into his mouth.

A drop of fruit syrup on Loki’s lip distracted Tony for a moment. When Loki’s tongue darted out licking his lower lip clean it threatened to derail Tony’s entire thought process.

“Stop it both of you.” Pepper demanded, “Just don’t either of you go there.”

Startled, Tony tore his attention away from the god’s now syrup free lip to find Loki watching him with amusement dancing in his bright green eyes.

“We still have to fix this current mess without either of you starting more trouble.”

Flushing, Tony was just about to make a lame joke to try and deflect Pepper’s admonishment when he realized she was still talking about the second book challenge and not... Other things.

“I already have Pep,” Tony said wrenching his attention back to the topic of her concern. “You will be happy to hear that as of noon the book will be permanently retracted. For free even or rather for a nice part time gig in Brno as our student liaison with CEITEC. For two years she’ll report to the Stark International Physics and Materials group. Jarvis is going to set her up an efficiently flat and a monthly stipend. She’ll work for them part time while she works on her Masters.”

Fortunately for Tony, the chick wanted to travel so she made no objection to her Loki-Allied ass being shipped to one of their relatively minor facility’s in central Europe.

Two hard blue eyes bored into him. “Pep, don’t look at me like that. The slot was vacant. There was still money in the scholarship fund and she actually had some skills that they were looking for over there, so it was as win-win as far as I’m concerned. The retraction is permanent and we aren’t even obligated to retain her after her initial contract expires.”

Honestly, Pepper had no real complaint. In the past she had offered more to make smaller problems go away. Hell, even Loki was happy with the plan according to Jarvis. In fact, Tony would be willing to bet that before Morgan Hayes’ plane touched down in the Czech Republic, the god would be making plans on how best to get his little protégé moving up the company ladder. Good luck there though, Jarvis had already been instructed to periodically remind him and Pepper about the necessity of keeping an eye on Ms. Morgan Hayes, stealth collaborator to the gods.

OoooO

While he was secretly delighted, Tony didn’t say a word when Loki showed up in the lab Monday

next. If Mischief Incarnate considered them to now be even, who was he to argue with him? Tony had absolutely savored the give and take of the morning's session and had fought to keep a stupid grin from forming on his face every time Loki spoke to him. It was hard, but if there was anything that Tony Stark was, it was cool. He managed to merely smile and open up another project file for them to look at as if the last few months hadn't ever happened.

A few hours later Loki had looked over at time and said very matter-of-factly, "I have to go."

The god wasn't mad or anything, he just stood and gathered up his recently returned message bag that was permanently lighter by several items, and walked away.

Confused Tony stared at him with a small furrow on his forehead as the god headed towards the door.

Leaving? Why? They'd been have a good morning. Tony's chest tightened painfully as he cast his thoughts back over the last few minutes of their conversation trying to figure out what had caused the god to leave so abruptly.

Stopping at the lab's security door, Loki turned abruptly back to look at him.

Tony smiled. It was forced, but he'd had plenty of practice smiling when he didn't feel like it, so he knew it wouldn't appear as anything but genuine.

"I'll see you at dinner? Seven o'clock?" Loki asked with one brow lifted in inquiry.

Oh thank god.

"Yeah." Tony said evenly, though he would have sworn that thump from his heart restarting should have been audible. "Seven's good. If I'm not up there have Jarvis remind me."

The god nodded and then spun around, breezed through the security doors and into the elevator lobby.

Waiting until the elevator doors closed Tony clutched at his chest, rubbing away the lingering pain of his initial shock.

Longevity and enhanced health bestowed or not, Tony thought, I am getting too old for this shit.

"Jarvis, where *is* Prince Charming going?"

"Mister Odinson has an appointment with the Human Resources Training coordinator, Sir. I believe they are trying to work some of the classes that were canceled into his current training schedule." Jarvis said. "Was there anything in particular you wanted to order for dinner, Sir? I understand the executive dining room is featuring spaghetti squash primavera, grilled red snapper with an herb-drizzled spinach, and onion and tomato salad on today's lunch menu."

Pulling a long face, Tony thought a moment. "You know, that sounds as good as anything else. They got anything Blitzen might fancy for dessert?"

"Raspberry and strawberry medley tarts would most likely be the best choice available today, Sir."

"That works for me, Jarvis. Have them make up a couple of plates before they close down for the day."

Without any fuss being made that evening, Loki strode into the penthouse just before seven. The grilled snapper and the mixed berry tart choices went over particularly well with the Trickster. Afterwards, he and Loki sat on the patio drinking and discussing this morning's lab session while the sun set. A horribly bad movie and heading off to their rooms for bed completed their first evening back together since the fight.

It felt good to Tony; more than good even, someone to eat dinner with that wasn't an idiot, drinks while discussing interesting ideas and then a kindred soul to snark with while watching a truly bad film. Loki was like his favorite parts of Rhodey, Bruce and Pepper all rolled into one hot looking Nordic Space Alien package; better even, because he was available to Tony in a way that the others weren't. Hell, even when Tony was with Pepper in Europe for three weeks, he'd only gotten a fraction of her time and attention.

OoooO

Along with the sunshine streaming in his windows, Tony's morning summary from Jarvis included the news that instead of going into his room to sleep the previous evening, Loki had instead packed up all his clothes and personal items. With the assistance of a laundry cart Minion provided for him, he had moved everything from the penthouse bedroom down into the little apartment just outside the security doors on his floor. The god had spent several hours last night unpacking and settling into the lower level apartment.

When questioned, he'd informed Jarvis that he wanted his clothes closer, even if he wasn't allowed to stay in the apartment and that he had no intention of ever staying in the penthouse again. Tony rolled over, burying his face in the soft pillows when that little tid-bit had been shared with him. Privately, he would acknowledge that he had experienced much heavier blows in his life.

Obviously.

But that didn't make this new pain hurt any less. Tony would never admit it to anyone, but the feeling of relief he'd experienced yesterday when Loki showed up in the lab had been enormous.

Over the last few years, Loki had become a constant in Tony's life. Thoughts of Loki and what the god might do, say or enjoy occurred to the engineer numerous times a day when they were apart. Oh Pep and Rhodey were still his two best friends; but he'd spent a lot more time with Loki over the last three years than with either of them, barring of course the last three months when Tony was hiding from Fury. But even when Tony had been in Europe with Pepper, he had still thought of the god several times a day. The reverse had not been true the previous three years when he had spent time with the others; perhaps, because Pepper and Rhodey were busy people and not interested in the things that interested Tony.

Sure, he and Rhodey were still friends, but they mostly reminisced about the old days now. The main interest they shared previously being the improvement of the Air Forces' weapon systems, which Tony no longer made. Rhodey was still someone he could go out with, have a drink with and be comfortable with, but they didn't really have a lot to talk about anymore. And of course, Tony still loved Pepper but she almost always wanted to talk business. She certainly would never have wanted to spend the evening with him discussing power transfer mechanisms or which material composites would facilitate it.

Hell, even when he and Pepper were engaged, most of their conversations were skewed towards what was going on at Stark International and how they could make it better... Or what she needed from Tony by way of signatures, approvals or tech solutions to improve it. It was great for Stark international, but not so great for the man who wanted to be her center of attention.

When you got right down to it that had been Tony's problem with all of his relationships. Tony wanted...

No.

Tony *needed* to be the center of someone's world. He *needed* to be the full time focus of their attention. He didn't want a friend who thought that knowing Tony Stark would set him on the road to advancement, or one who would stop their research for months at a time while he helped some clinic get set up and certified or fill in at the last minute for some Doctors without Borders tour. He certainly didn't want a girlfriend who was more interested in the perks of being with Tony Stark than she was in Tony Stark himself; and definitely not one who wanted to secure a permanent position in his life by breeding.

In addition to being their center of attention, he also needed someone who could keep up while he worked, drank or played. Lord knows the Trickster god could keep up with him on all those counts; additionally, by virtue of Loki's position, Tony was certainly the center of the god's world.

And Tony would be lying if he said he that didn't make him happy. That was why the estrangement between the two of them had been so hard on the engineer and why he had been overjoyed when Loki showed up in the lab this morning. And why Loki's late night living quarter relocation upset him so much this morning.

It was all Tony could do to shove aside the sheets and comforter and stumble into the bathroom to answer nature's call and get ready to start his day.

"So he's still pissed?" He asked more than slightly dejected.

"He didn't appear to be, Sir. I did inquire if there was still a problem."

"And?" Tony mumbled around his toothbrush.

"He seemed to think it would be easier on him in case of any other altercations in the future. Also he thinks it would be better to have his own place now for when he has friends over."

"Friends? Friends from where?" Tony asked, his brows knotted in puzzlement, not quite sure how he is supposed to respond to a someone who wears a security cuff and has a designated if seldom used cell deciding he was going to have '*friends*' over. Especially since Tony doesn't want to share this particular friend with other people in the first place.

"He didn't say, Sir. I foresee an attempt at boundary stretching in your immediate future."

"An attempt, Jarvis? Singular?" Tony took a slug of mouth wash and swished it a round while he rinsed off his toothbrush and popped it in its recharger.

Amusement tinged Jarvis's reply. "I suspect I will stand corrected, Sir. Mister Odinson is not likely to let the opportunity to increase his freedoms after your transgression pass with a single attempt. I'm sure we will both find his numerous attempts enterprising as well as entertaining."

"Entertaining? Yeah. I am sure that is exactly the word I'll want to use when he starts his shit."

"Indeed, Sir. Speaking of starting, Mister Odinson is in the elevator on his way up for breakfast. While you reverted to boxers at breakfast while you two were at odds, I do think you would want to put some clothes on before he gets here."

Leaning back in the booth, Loki swirled his drink peering intently as the ice gently clinked against the sides. “I do what I want Stark.” Amused eyes flicked over towards Tony. “Besides, how could I resist? It was a magnificent jest and I understand that even in the brief time it was available the sales had climbed far higher than any other book I had released. Of course I didn’t get all of the money it made, I did have to share,” Loki said, managing to sound regretful at the lost revenue while still gleeful at the success of the prank.

“I thought you didn’t share?” Tony chided, harkening back to a remark the god had made many years ago to him and Pepper.

“I can make an exception for a good cause,” Loki said as he ducked his head looking innocently up through long smoky lashes.

With expressions like that, it was no wonder that Loki-mom and big-bro kept cutting the god slack. Okay, so maybe Tony had too, but given the choice of remaining pissed... or getting over it and having his running buddy back... Tony choose to be amused.

OoooO

The dark haired god only just stopped himself from clutching his hair in frustration. “It won’t work Stark, you have not prepared the metal properly,”

Equally irritated, Tony dropped the brazing torch to floor and rolled out from underneath a scale model air-sled. The engineer had been working hard all morning as witnessed by the numerous soot stains on his jeans and grey Kings of Metal t-shirt. Pulling off and tossing aside his work gloves, he huffed before irritably unsnapping the front of his leather sleeves. Lacing his fingers together the engineer lay his hands across his stomach with an air of forced calm.

“Oh wise one from the stars. Pray tell me why conductive metal will not conduct.” Tony asked irritably, looking up at Loki.

“You just can't melt it into a shape without taking into account the power distribution needed by the structure you are trying to elevate. The molecules of the metal have to be aligned to specific points to allow the power to flow correctly, otherwise you lose too much energy to allow proper lift.”

Rolling his eyes, Tony twisted off the mechanics creeper and started to stand. “You could have mentioned that before I started you know.”

Irritably smoothing his tie, Loki crossed his arms over it, cocking an eyebrow at the engineer. “I did. You don't listen.”

“I listen just fine, you--”

“Sir! The Avengers are being summoned to deal with a fleet of Doom-bots.”

Tony finished scrambling to his feet and had passed through the lab’s security doors before he was even fully upright.

“Aw crap! Where this time?”

OoooO

“New York, Stark.” Hill informed him over Jarvis’ open line.

“Well no shit. Of course it’s New York, but where?” Tony grouched, darting out of the elevator at the penthouse and running towards his suit assembly platform. Being a semi-retired Avenger, Tony is only a first responder when something hits New York State; or, the inventor smirks to himself as the suit folded around him, aliens threatened the planet as a whole. Something he isn’t really worried about as he has the only known alien to do such a thing under twenty-four hour surveillance.

As it turned out the doom bots were headed to New York City in general, his fucking tower in particular. Spiderman was local, so he got there pretty quick. Not quite as quick to arrive as Steve and Natasha, who had been in Washington D.C., Rhodey and Bruce were currently out of the country and Thor, of course, wasn’t even on the planet. The Thunder god’s appearances at these little shindigs were unpredictable and sporadic these days at best.

About two hours later, there was good news and bad news. The good news was that his building and the ones closest to it were protected. The bad news, of course, was that there were only so many times direct hits that caused white mist to coalesce and do no damage could be explained away. While the damn bots weren’t causing his building any harm the same could not be said for what they were doing to the Avengers.

“Jarvis, what’s the count?” Tony panted. He had started ignoring the bots and was trying unsuccessfully to get fucking Doom who disappeared anytime Tony got anywhere close to him. Jarvis had taken out several bots with his guns, but Tony really wished the *fully retired from the Avengers* Barton had been perched upon one of the adjoining roofs with some Stark supplied exploding arrows. It would have made his life just a bit easier.

“We were winning Sir, but it seems that reinforcements have arrived.”

“I swear to god I am going to find out where in Malaysia Doom is having these damn things mass-produced and I am going to call down an air strike on it.”

“I’ll put it on your ‘to do’ list Sir.”

“Tony, a little help over here please.”

And with that, Tony had to leave off stalking Victor to try and thin out the cluster of bots targeting Grandpa Steve.

“Sir, I need you at the penthouse level immediately.”

Tony hit his thrusters just in time to avoid being hit by a trio of missiles before returning fire and crippling another bot. “I’m a little busy right now, Jarvis.”

“Sir, I need you now. Von Doom is back and this may be your last chance today to get him.”

Steve threw his shield heavily damaging another bot, caught it on the rebound and threw it again causing the bot to explode. “Go ahead Tony; I can take care of this last one.”

“Only because you’re still so spry for older fellow.” Tony retorted, shooting away and spiraling up the perimeter of his tower. “Alright Jarvis, where is he?”

“I need you in the penthouse, Sir.”

Fucking. Hell.

Tony felt his blood freeze. How in the hell had Doom gotten into his building without him

knowing about it.

“Sir! I am opening the landing platform doors. Please don’t come in through a window!”

As Tony swung out to make a full powered approach through the doors, he saw Loki standing at the top of the stairs behind the bar. Doom was in his tower and his now fragile deity was not in a secure location. Tony’s heart felt like it was going to pound right out of his chest and straight through the front of his suit.

“Jarvis!” He roared. “Why the hell isn’t Loki in my lab! You know the Doom Attack protocol calls for him and Pepper to be in one of the suit safe rooms in case the tower is breached!” Tony flew in at speed, gouging deep scratches in the marble floor as he landed.

“I am sorry sir, he insisted,” Said the AI apologetically as the ballistic glass door slammed shut.

“Jarvis, I swear I am going to donate you to a junior college.” Tony snarled at his recalcitrant AI.

“Stark, where the hell did you go?” Natasha’s shrilled from Tony’s ear piece.

“Keep your pants on Red. I’m checking a situation; I’ll be right with you.” Tony snapped, toggling the privacy switch. “Jarvis, keep an ear out for Nat but mute her unless I absolutely have to hear her,” He said, moving to shield Loki as quickly as he could while scanning the area looking for Doom.

“Kneel,” The god commanded rushing to close the gap between them.

Okay. No Doom here, but a domineering god? What the hell?

Tony leaned back a bit and flipped his visor open to look at Loki. Mouth agape and brows furled in confusion, Tony isn’t even going to try to hide the fact that he is six freaking kinds of astonished.

“KNEEL!” The god roared stamping his foot sharply on the floor and shoving Tony.

Truly. What the fuck?

Now Tony was really freaked out. All he needed was for Prince Prozac to be brandishing his glow stick of destiny instead of that damn sharpie and Tony would be having flashback induced panic attacks.

“Sir, Mister Odinson needs to be able to access the undersides of the drag flaps.”

“What the hell Jay?”

“Kneel you fool, head to the floor if you can manage it.” Loki was practically vibrating with impatience. “Open the flaps. Hurry we don’t have much time.”

Okay. Tony’s brown eyes locked on to Loki’s green ones.

“I know you have a kink for this kind of stuff Loki and I really think I could accommodate you on some of it. I’m not judging or anything because I know that a lot of people get really turned on by violence... But honestly Bambi, now is not the time.” Tony said gently.

Shocked would not even begin to describe the look Tony was getting from Wack god. Tony would be looking around for the hidden camera by now if he wasn’t in his own tower surrounded by multiple hidden cameras of his own.

“Jarvis, did you not tell him the plan?” Loki hissed.

“I’m afraid I didn’t have time Mister Odinson. Sir was rather busy.” Jarvis apologized. “Sir, Mister Odinson has agreed the place a rune on your armour making you invisible.”

No shit?

“Really?” It was Tony’s turn to be absolutely, completely and totally, mouth hanging stupidly open, shocked. Loki offering him something was not what surprised him. But... Offering something that Tony didn’t know he had? Giving up a potential Ace-in-the-hole? The engineer was fairly sure that Loki didn’t often give up any kind of advantage...at least not to someone who was not his mother or brother.

Tony was touched.

“Okay... But you know I already have a Stealth Suit don’t you. I mean you’ve seen it. Or not seen it so to speak.”

“Not invisible like that ridiculous suit you wore onto my floor that one time.” Irritably, Loki pushed against him again trying to force him down onto his knees. “Which barely fooled the eye and could not mask its self from mechanical sensors or magic, both of which I am sure this Doom person uses. Nor as I understand it did that suit carry the array of weapons you normally need to destroy these wretched doom bots since much of the mechanical space was devoted to making it marginally invisible.”

“Jarvis, Jarvis, Jarvis.” Tsked Tony. “You have been a bad AI. Giving away Daddy’s trade secrets like that.”

Mortal strength Loki pushing on the suit worked as well as a toddler trying to push over a Buick. And just like a thwarted toddler, Loki was starting to sport a massive pout and loud shrill cries of complaint were doubtless something to be feared in the near future.

“No sir, I have been making deals,” Jarvis stated in a hard voice. “But what you are doing now is wasting time. I am afraid Sir, I must ask you to kneel immediately or for your own safety I will have to take control of the suit and make it kneel for you. We are running out of time.”

Tony would have liked to scrub his scalp a few times. Or rub his face or... Actually quite a few things that he could not rub with a suit and gauntlets on. That is what he would have liked to do. What he actually did was pop his drag panels and kneel, with the face plate of his suit as close to the floor as he could get it.

“At last.” Loki breathed crouching behind him and actually laying his chest on the back of the suit “Hang on a minute while I clean the inside of this flap.”

“Now why couldn’t you do this when I didn’t have all this metal wrapped around me?” Tony teased.

Shifting a bit to try and see behind him got the back of Tony’s helmet thumped with a godly fist. “Jarvis, if you can please lock all the joints; I don’t want him to move while I do this.”

“Ohhhh. Kinky. Restraints. I don’t normally go there for just anyone, but for you Rudolf, I can totally get into it.”

“Jarvis!” The god hissed irritably as he uncapped the sharpie and took a deep breath to center himself.

Tony's yelp was cut off as his face plate closed and locked into place.

"I am sorry Sir, but I have cut your outside mic. Mister Odinson needs to concentrate.

Making a mental note to really look over Jarvis's Protection Override Protocols, Tony took a deep breath. "All right Jay, what did you bargain away for this? Oh and port me some visuals, I want to keep track of Mister Wizard."

"I'd really rather not say, sir."

"Jarvis. I want to know now." Retorted the inventor while watching video feed of the god lying almost flat across Tony's back and painstakingly drawing on the inside of the drag flap.

"Well it *was* supposed to be one future favor that I didn't tell anyone about. A favor that would not harm you in any way," Sighed Jarvis.

"*Was*?"

"*Was*. If I told you about it, it turned into two favors. Which is why I did try to refrain from mentioning the deal."

"I wonder why if Loki had this rune tucked up his sleeve, he used the smoke screen instead of this?"

"I did ask about that, Sir. Once activated, this is a permanent. Ah. I believe Mister Odinson is finished, Sir." Tony heard a ping that let him know his suit speakers were restored just as he felt a tap on the back of his helmet. Through the video feed he could see the god, who was apparently lying on thin air, climbing off Tony's now completely invisible suit capping the marking pen.

"Was it as good for you as it was for me?" Tony asked, smiling behind his mask as the god did an overly dramatic eye roll.

"The rune shouldn't get damaged because of the location I placed it in but if it does that will not mean the suit simply becomes visible. It means that the spell will fail in various areas."

"So I could be flying around with only my cod piece showing?" Tony asked with a leer in his voice while heading towards the landing platform. "Jarvis, find me Doom will you?"

"Stark! Don't forget no one will be able to see you. Not this Doom, not the other Avengers. Make sure they don't shoot you down by mistake."

Tony turned at the edge of the platform bringing his right gauntlet up to his face mask tossing Loki an invisible kiss as he stepped off the edge.

"Jarvis? If everything is invisible, how is it I can still see the display?"

"An excellent question, Sir. Your suit is invisible and untraceable to anyone on the outside. Neither you nor I are on the outside of the suit. Before I agreed, I did insist that Mister Odinson test it on one of the scrap masks in the lab, of course. If you are ready to resume communications Sir, Agent Romanoff would very much like to yell at you. Also, Captain Rogers is upset that you withdrew from the battle."

Laughing Tony looked around, "Well Jarv, both of those go without saying I would think."

"Alright, let's go get Doom. That should shut everyone up." And of course, when Tony said he

was going to get Doom... He meant he was going to get Doom. The bastard wasn't going to have another chance to escape and threaten his city again, or his friends. And Doom particularly wasn't going to ever threaten anyone who resided in Stark Tower.

“Jarvis, fire up one of the decoy suits and have it appear somewhere near a doom bot. Don't let anyone know it isn't me. Oh, and permanently delete all the security footage and anything else we need to get rid of to keep this top secret.”

SHIELD had let that caped bastard slip their leash so many times, Tony had long suspected that Victor's cell door was secured with a luggage lock. More likely, Doom had bought his way out of prison with various inventions that Tony highly doubted SHIELD's R&D drones could have ever come up with on their own.

“Victor Von Doom is just ahead to the left, sir.”

Tony now had a suit that only one other person knew existed that was invisible and untraceable by both conventional and magical means. He also had Victor Von Doom in his sights.

Tony felt the side of his mouth curl in a decidedly evil smirk.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.

They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **summerlove_jls** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Loki Lou

Chapter Summary

The sugar hits the Asgardian fan.

Chapter Notes

And, here ya go. Not entirely thrilled with this chapter, but despite the many attempts to make it better... I can't. At long last Frigga and Thor!

As I mentioned last update, I do like fan art. So please... feel free to be creative here if that is your talent. I would be honored. [rennemichaels](#) at hot mail dot com or message me on my new facebook page, you will know the correct Renne Michaels when you see my Snow Flake avatar. Nothing much on that page yet, but company is always welcome.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 50–Loki Lou

“Yo! Meredith. Melony. Whatever your name is. We need a few more beers and another pitcher of this Peach Sangria crap for my stud-ly looking friend here with the unfortunate taste in effeminate drinks.” Tony called to the heavily laden waitress approaching their table, ignoring the low watt glare Loki tossed at him. “What? I was talking about Steve,” He protested.

“I might buy that Stark if either of you two oafs were not drinking that repulsive beer.”

“Don’t mind him,” Tony said, smiling up at the waitress who was unloading several chicken empanadas with buffalo sauce in front of Steve. “He’s just PMS’ing because you guys don’t carry that foo-foo fruity crap that is the only beer he will drink.” Tony reached over and snagged a slice of the meat lover’s pizza that the waitress had already set on the table. As she set a salad down from the heavy tray he shuddered theatrically.

“Don’t even set that salad by me,” He pushed the offending greenery closer to the god of rabbit food. “What normal person even puts walnuts and cranberries on a tossed salad?”

“Tony, I think perhaps you have both had enough.”

Steve was used to the billionaire’s occasional outbursts of rude behavior, but he hated when Tony displayed it in public. Not only did he think it reflected poorly on the Avengers as a whole, but it always made Steve look like he wanted to shrink down into the plaid and kaki blandness that was his preferred wardrobe. Not that Tony particularly cared what Steve thought. He hadn't cared in the past and he certainly didn't care now that he was semi-retired from the hero business.

Not that Tony had disliked the hero business to start with, despite Pepper's bitching he never had... What he had disliked were the damn meetings, rehearsals, team building exercises and forced public appearances. After all, if he didn't like wasting time doing crap like that for his own company that paid him big bucks every year. So he sure as hell didn't like doing it for free. Especially not while getting yelled at every five minutes by a goody-two shoes and a one eyed maniac. Besides, Fury wasn't nearly as easy on the eye as Pepper was.

After making sure that Loki had enough balsamic dressing, their waitress sat the last pizza that they had ordered, a travesty of chicken barbecue ranch with mozzarella, down on the table.

Marilynn graced them with a '*my tip depends on being nice to you shit heads*' smile, promised to bring more drinks in a few minutes and made her escape.

"You really need to be a bit more accommodating Tony." Steve sighed, smiling apologetically at the departing waitress.

"Look, did I or did I not agree to be debriefed? And did I or did I not come all the way out to freaking Brooklyn for you? Seriously, who lives out this way?" Face scrunched in faux puzzlement, Tony looked down at the bar area as if amazed that he has safely crossed the vast wasteland between downtown Manhattan and... Here.

"I, Tony Stark, am in a dinky bar in Brooklyn of all places. I think I am being more than accommodating here Stevie."

Okay so in hindsight maybe letting Loki pick the restaurant was not the smartest thing that Tony had ever done, since not even Cap looked comfortable entering this tiny hell hole. But it was, as Tony had specified, over in Steve's neck of the woods. Loki had whispered a few words in the doorman's ear and they had been escorted up a bunch of stairs to a small balcony. Tony suspected that either Loki or Jarvis had called ahead, since the place was packed yet the balcony seating had been vacant. Looking like it was normally used for private parties or the occasional DJ setup the balcony was at least quieter and separated from the mass of locals crowding the lower area. So Tony was definitely not complaining. Their waitress might though, on account of all the steps, but Tony wasn't going to.

"So, Stars and Stripes what do you want to know?" Tony asked, after they had eaten in silence for several minutes.

"Finish your dinner. It can wait until after we eat." Steve said shifting a bit uncomfortably. Tony eyed him narrowly but was distracted by the tray of drinks entering his peripheral vision.

"Evil Olive Pizza Bar Stark? Seriously?" Natasha asked, with an arched brow setting down the awaited drink pitcher on the table.

"Monica?"

"Her name was *Marilynn* asshole," Clint said, pulling out one of the five vacant chairs and placing it at the head of the table between Tony and Steve. He and Natasha sat down across from Loki and beside Steve. Fury stalked to the head of the table like Darth Vader getting ready to have a meeting on the bridge of the Death Star.

"Hey Lo picked this dump, not me." Tony protested, as the god of Pretentious Brattiness just smirked and snagged the fresh pitcher of Peach Sangria.

"It has a very interesting name." Loki informed the newcomers with a smile.

Noting the empty glasses that Natasha had also placed on the table, Loki held up the pitcher and looked over at Barton, “Would you like some Agent Barton? It’s quite tasty,” He asked politely.

Clint huffed. “Like I would trust your word on even that, you are a noted liar after all.”

“And you are not only a cretin, but also a poor scholar. Nowhere in myth am I noted as a liar. In fact, what is most remembered about me in legend is that I am a trickster. You cannot get people to believe you and go along with your schemes if you are a proven liar.” The deity replied, going from socially polite to confrontationally rude in one point six seconds.

Maybe Steve was right. Maybe Loki had drank enough this evening.

“So you’re a weasel who confuses people with the truth?” Asked Natasha, pouring a beer and passing it to Steve to give to Fury.

“Weasel?” Loki’s eyes sparkled. He laughed in delighted before tilting his head almost bashfully and showing them a wide happy smile. “A clever, quick, agile animal that is ferocious when challenged, and able to drive off animals much larger than itself. Agent Romanoff, I fear you are trying to make me blush. But yes, I have found feeble minded people are easily confused. Especially by the truth.”

“Weasels also kill for sport.” Natasha retorted.

“As do all true Æsir Agent Romanoff, the love of the hunt and all that you know.”

“Can it, you two,” Fury snapped. “Stark why did you not attend the mission debrief on Monday?”

“Ummm, because I’m retired from the Avengers and I don’t have to?” Tony guessed, raising his own brow and giving Fury a sidelong look.

“You’re only semi-retired Stark,” Barton interrupted. “I’m fully retired and I still have to go to the damn things.”

“Yeah Tweety, but despite that accident that took you out of the hero business permanently, you also work for SHIELD full time as a liaison for the Avengers. I don’t get paid by them, so I don’t have to go. Makes sense, yes?”

“Not when we have so many questions, it doesn’t.” The redhead said. She folded her denim clad arms, leaning on the table while giving Tony a penetrating stare.

“Stark first your tower wasn’t damaged, in spite of the full on attack, and then Doom... who you have been battling for years without major success, suddenly drops from the sky and becomes a Last Rites Pizza. Without you or anyone else being anywhere near him. Can you explain why?”

Pasting on his very best, ‘damned if I know’ expression, Tony turned his head toward Fury, reaching up with one hand to pull his sunglasses down a bit so that he could peer over them. And Fury might have bought it... If the fucking bastard beside him hadn’t shifted his chair sideways and full on leaned against him with a big assed smirk on his face.

“Tony Stark, why? Why are you taking our Christmas tree? Why?” Loki’s one arm was draped across the back of Tony’s chair, while he whispered warmly in Tony’s ear. Out of the corner of his eye, Tony could see the god maintaining an insolent eye contact with the glaring Fury. Tony wasn’t sure what he wished for more... For Fury to have a stroke from the aggravation or that he had never introduced the damn Trickster to Doctor Seuss.

“You know, I can explain this,” Tony told Fury dismissively, waving his hand as though he was shooing away SHIELD and their “*take him alive so we can interrogate him*” orders. No matter how many times Doom had escaped to cause him more grief... Anyhow, Tony was all on top of this. No problem at all. Except for the Asgardian dick who was distracting him by breathing old cartoon quotes into his ear... With a voice that was traveling a lot lower than his main brain.

“But do you know, that old Stark was so smart and so slick, that he thought up a lie and he thought it up quick.” Loki lulled into his ear. Tony was willing to swear the bastard had licked the shell of his ear, before leaning away with a wide opened mouth grin.

“Ummm. Yeah... I can definitely explain this... Well about the building anyhow. Total weapons upgrade and Jarvis is a hell of a marksman isn’t he?” Tony shrugged, “But why Doom’s suit exploded? Poor maintenance perhaps? Don’t know. Haven’t a clue.”

“Well? Why haven’t you? Is our resident genius being distracted by someone?” Fury growled, seemingly not the least bit amused by the semi-possessive long white fingers gently stroking the side of Tony’s neck, occasionally twirling the playboy’s short brown hair.

And hell yeah that was distracting.

“Huh?” Tony said, just to wind Fury up further.

“You know if you came in to the debriefings like you were supposed to, we wouldn’t all have to put up with you and your distraction. Perhaps he would wait here with Rogers and Barton while you, Romanoff and I go over to that other table and talk for a few minutes.”

“Distracted? By who? Loki Lou Who here? Who is much more than two? But doesn’t act his damn age? And is probably half bombed?” Tony rolled his head over to regard the grinning god sitting far too close to him. “Yeah... Okay. We’ll go talk over there.” Tony decided, peeling the evilly smirking god off of himself. “Stay here my sweet little tot. I have to go talk to the Grinch, you stay here and be good for Uncle Steve.” He patted Loki’s leg. “You know Nat, if Fury is the Grinch that would make you his dog Max.” Tony scooted back his chair and stood. “Just saying.”

“Oh and by the way,” It was Tony’s turn to lean down and plaster himself close, his mouth at the god’s ear so no one could hear what he was saying. “As soon as I figure out how to do maintenance on an invisible suit, you and I *will* come to an agreement about putting that invisibility rune on at least one other suit.”

OoooO

“Don’t be ridiculous Director Fury, after all these years you think I can’t tell when he’s having sex? Tony and Loki aren’t intimately involved; they’re just like pranking each other in public.”

“Pranking? Seriously Potts? Aren’t they both a little too old to be crawling all over each other in public?”

“Yes, they are, but I don’t expect them to stop anytime in the near future. They love seeing who can embarrass the other one the most.”

“I didn’t think it was possible to embarrass Stark,” Fury snorted.

“Well you can, but it takes a lot.” She sighed, “And Loki has managed it more than my PR people care to think about. He is the god of mischief you know.” She said with a small smile. She could hear Fury growling on the other end of the line before he terminated the call.

OoooO

“Sir, energy readings on the roof suggest that you have a guest from Asgard getting ready to arrive.” Jarvis said apologetically, causing Tony to open a bleary eye before lifting his head from the work bench where he had fallen asleep.

“Crap Jarvis, what time is it?” Tony grumbled, blinking widely a few times to unglue his eye lids.

“Eight fifteen in the morning sir. You appear to have several guests, but only Thor and Queen Frigga are approaching the living room.

Tony scrubbed his hands through this hair a few times, raking it up into wild peaks before wiping the drool off his face with the back of his hand and staggering to his feet.

Okay. I am now officially ready to greet my day and whatever fucked up shit is coming down the rainbow express.

“Ummm, Jarv, you might want to lock down our favorite pain in the ass on his floor until we see what’s happening. What’s he doing anyway?”

“What he always does at this time of the day sir, answering his emails. He appears to be in a bit of a mood though. He is not aware that we have guests.”

“Good. Don’t tell him that he’s on lock down unless he tries to leave, and you definitely shouldn’t tell him whose here until I find out what is going on.”

While he couldn’t have pinpointed the cause of his feeling, Tony just knew that shit would be hitting the fan shortly. After all, there was no way that Thor and Frigga together could be good news.

OoooO

And indeed it wasn’t. Tony’s brain was so overloaded with conflicting thoughts that he was having a hard time understanding exactly what the Queen of Asgard was saying. All he knew was that the bottom had just dropped out of his comfortable existence.

Tony’s face was screwed up in confusion that the early morning hour and lack of coffee had surely contributed to. “Return to Asgard? Now?” He looked at his Asgardian visitors before focusing solely on Frigga. “Why?”

“If you must know Anthony, as one of the chief treasures of Asgard, the All Father and the council have decided that Loki must be returned,” Frigga told him pausing reflectively. “Of course that is not exactly how the council decree was worded it, but the sentiment was there even if the phrasing was much harsher and included the word prisoner so as not to sound too desperate.”

“He’s not a fucking vase you know, he’s a person with feelings.” Tony could ignore Thor glowering at him for his language towards the Queen of Asgard, but he was hard pressed to ignore Frigga when she gave him the ‘*Disappointed Mom Number Seventeen*’ look.

“I know Anthony. However much I deplore him leaving a place where he has been realitively happy for these last few years, there is nothing I can do to delay his return any longer.”

“Yeah? Well I’m not you,” Tony thought, darkly mulling over various crazy scenarios that would allow the god to stay on Earth.

“Believe me, Mother has delayed this many times friend Tony,” Thor rumbled apparently following Frigga’s lead and dismissing Tony’s intemperate language. “It has taken years for my father to talk mother into his returning. She may not be able to control tempests as I do, but Mother’s ill temper can be worse than the largest storm that I could possibly summon.”

Easily picking up on Tony’s distress, Frigga gave Tony a comforting smile, the kind that he maybe remembers getting when he was young from his own mother--, Tony resolutely shut down those thoughts, wrenching his consciousness back to the warm fuzzy blanket wrapped, calming, mother cat purring vibes that Frigga was throwing off. And wondering how the hell she did that.

Not that any kind of warm feelings were going to last in the face of Loki’s reaction when he found out he was still going to be a prisoner even after he returned. Just thinking about how distressed the god was going to be made Tony feel like someone had decided to dump a bucket of ice water on his own Frigga induced inner kitten.

OoooO

Where was fucking Pepper when he needed her? Oh right. On her way to Japan.

Releasing a god took a lot more paper work than Tony would have guessed. And time. Thor took it upon himself to escort Frigga to a suddenly called meeting in the Attorney General’s office over on Saint Andrew’s Plaza. Tony had no idea what she was doing, but she apparently was going to meet with the hastily summoned group she’d made Loki’s original protection deal with. Afterwards she was going to meet Maria Hill and Fury if he could get there in time, at the Wyndham for lunch. The Atrium was a decent restaurant, but more importantly the hotel which housed it had the highest security, for a public building in the whole of New York City.

Meanwhile Tony was stuck dealing with some old stick of a lawyer in the queen’s entourage as they finalized the accounts. He also had to sign a bunch of indemnity releases and future servitor notices. Which fortunately for him were in frickin’ English. With Pepper out of pocket, Tony just had Jarvis scan them for gotcha’s. By the time he was half way through the stack, he wasn’t even reading the damn things, relying on Jarvis to alert him to any problems. Not that they had found any... Tony being Queen Frigga’s fair-haired boy so to speak. Mostly they were just papers acknowledging various reasons that the crown no longer owed him any money and a list of retention clauses should Frigga need him again. None of them mentioned Loki’s private accounts so neither did he.

As soon as Tony was done, he left Frigga’s herd ensconced in the living room while he fled to his private elevator.

“Jarvis, scramble some of the worker bees. I want some stuff assembled like now.”

While neither Frigga nor Thor had spoken with him yet, Jarvis reported that Loki had felt the tell-tale vibrations of the bi-frost hitting the roof nowhere near the time for Tony’s quarterly report to be submitted. That coupled with the unusual lockdown that Tony had instituted so his recalcitrant raven-haired little psychopath didn’t take a runner, had let the Trickster know that something different was occurring.

“So what’s Snape up to right now Jarvis?” Tony asked, as he fled to his lab. So yeah, he really should have gone down and started breaking the news to the Lokemiester but he needed to dig out a bottle of something that had been aged in oak first. Admittedly Tony could have just picked something from his bar... But the idea of drinking in front of so many judging Asgardian eyes watching him didn’t appeal to him.

“He seems to have spent most of the morning in some distress sir.” Jarvis said, throwing a visual up on one of the holo-screens. Tony watched for several minutes while sipping his scotch and tapping out additional items for Jarvis to get ready.

Loki was sitting at his desk, perfectly still in front of the screen mounted on the wall in front of him, his one hand curled into a painfully tight fist on the desk in front of him. Loki’s other arm was resting on the desk bent at the elbow, chin and mouth resting in his palm, his thumb resting right below the outer corner of one eye and his index finger almost resting along the outside edge of his other eye.

And that was all he was doing, just sitting there, not moving anything but his pupils which they occasionally swept from side to side, with a lot of pauses and the occasional blink.

Okay, Tony wasn’t getting the distressed part. “Jarvis run it back a half hour and then fast forward okay.” Which Jarvis did, and Tony still couldn’t see it. “Jarvis. He’s reading, he hasn’t moved a muscle or even taken a deep breath in the last thirty minutes.”

“He supposedly is reading his email, but he hasn’t clicked on a message in all that time either Sir. Perhaps another angle?”

Javis changed the angle of the video feed to straight on, obviously from the on top of the monitor. From this view Tony could see fat tear drops welling up and silently slipping over the god’s dark lashes only to be caught and channeled by the fingers on his cheeks. That the god had been sitting there silently crying was evident by the previously unnoticed damp spot on the inside of his shirt sleeve where the tears have been running.

Tony doesn’t even want to think about what kind of fucked up self-control it takes to cry like without making a sound or movement of any kind.

He also doesn’t want to think how much practice it took for the god to get this good at it.

OoooO

Tony spent the next few hours in the lab getting a care package ready for Loki and absolutely not hiding from everyone. Unfortunately Tony couldn’t not-hide forever. When he re-joined Electric Company and his mother up in the living room it was past two in the afternoon. Frigga, with Jarvis’ assistance had already shooed her entourage out of the living room and down to the entertainment floor to wait for them.

“So.” Tony said, trying very much to look like he hadn’t spent the last few hours staring at the bottom of a repeatedly empty glass. The engineer knew, really knew that he had pissed away his last chanceto spend time with his friend, but he just couldn’t make himself go down to Loki’s floor yet. But then, Tony had never claimed he wasn’t a coward at heart.

Oh hell yeah, Tony ‘Fucking’ Stark could court near certain death by going up against almost unbeatable odds. That was easy. Fly a nuke into an unstable space portal without an exit plan? Not a problem. After all, in times like that it either worked in which case everyone cheers and they go out for shawarma or he’d be dead and not having to deal with the aftermath. And that was the part that makes him a coward.

If he had gone to see Loki and broke down, that would be bad. Worse would be actually admitting that he cared for the annoying bastard who he would most likely never see again. Even if he only admitted it to himself... If that happened, then Tony would spend countless hours reliving those moments. Hell, he’d gone there with Pepper. There were still times that Tony experienced a split

second of heart stabbing, utter despair when he picked up one of her calls. Tony hated having to relive the pain of desperately begging her not to break up with him even if over the years the duration had dwindled to only a few seconds for each painful episode. And now that his arc reactor was gone and he couldn't even lie to himself and blame it for the pain.

So Tony had stayed hidden in his lab until he had to join Thor and his mother up to the penthouse.

He gave them both a sickly smile, slumped down on the couch and tried to at least pretend he hadn't spent the last few hours drinking more than he should have. Not that he thought there was any chance of them not noticing, not with the way Thor was looking at him with such concern.

"Friend Tony, Mother would like to see Loki now. Perhaps I should accompany you to get my brother?"

"Loki. Yeah. Sure. Jarvis, don't tell him why, but please ask Loki to come up here." Tony asked, tiredly rubbing a hand across the back of his neck.

"Right away Sir."

Thor looked up at the ceiling frowning.

"What?"

Thor blinked asking cautiously, "Loki has free run of your tower?"

"Umm. Yeah. When I'm here. Otherwise he keeps to a few floors. Why? Is that a problem?" Tony asked, brow raised in inquiry as he glanced up at the tall Asgardian.

Looking slightly befuddled, Thor looked from Tony to his mother. Receiving no obvious clues from her on how to proceed he ducked his head sheepishly. "It was not my intent to tell you how to manage your own home I assure you. I just found it passing strange is all. What with Loki being your prisoner."

"Ah. Well. Down here on Earthgard we have things called halfway houses and work release." He shot a concerned look at Frigga. "You know he hasn't really lived in a cell in over four years."

A slight line creased her forehead. "No. I did not know that. Heimdall viewed him during the day. Although he did tell me that for the last few years, whenever he checked on Loki he was not confined. Where does stay then Anthony Stark?"

Oh.

Resisting the urge to fidgeting a bit, Tony smiled, smoothing down his black ACDC shirt, and then, to keep them from betraying his anxiety, he shoved both hands into the pockets of his faded blue jeans. He only just stopped himself from rocking back and forth nervously. Hoping that no one misconstrued anything, which Tony had to admit was a definite possibility.

"Well for a few years after his accident, he was in one of the guest rooms down that way," Tony pointed to the hallway on the far side of the fireplace. "But for the last year, he's been in his own small apartment right beside the elevator on his floor."

"An apartment?" Thor asked, more than a little puzzled. Tony decided to brazen it out.

"Well yeah. Its an Earth tradition, sort of, well in the more civilized Earth countries anyhow, that well behaved prisoners get extra privileges, like early release to halfway houses, or in this case apartments. It is a way to reintroduce them into society, while still keeping close enough track of

them to make sure they don't relapse."

Which apparently was not something Tony was guessing that they had in Viking Land, if the expressions on Frigga and Thor's faces were anything to go by. But before he was pressed into giving a lecture on '*Enlightened Prison Practices in the Twenty-First Century*' they heard his private elevator chime on the other side of the foyer.

"Stark what is going on?" Loki's peevish complaints floated into the living room ahead of him, "I felt the BiFrost activate, but it isn't the end of the quarter. Is something wrong on Asgard? Jarvis wouldn't tell me--" As he passed through the open doors, the god laid eyes upon his mother for the first time in over seven years.

"Mother?" Loki's voice cracked and a look of such joy flitted across his face that caused Tony to look away in embarrassment as the dark god sprang forward and wrapped his arms around his mother. He bent down to lay his head alongside hers, closing his eyes as if he had just been gifted with the most precious thing in the world.

"Shhhhhh, be calm my darling." Frigga whispered, lifting a hand and stroking her fingers tenderly in Loki's hair as a few small gasping breaths escaped the tall man holding her so tightly.

"I missed you so much." Loki whispered brokenly, in so low a voice that Tony barely heard him. Exchanging a glance with Thor, the both of them looked away again not wanting to intrude on such a private moment. After half a dozen maternal mutterings and several long moments, Loki took a shaky breath and stepped away. His hands trailed down Frigga's heavily embroidered sleeves, long fingers delicately tracing the gold design on the heavy bronze material until he reached where it covered the backs of her hands. Curling his fingers around hers he took another step back holding their hands outstretched between them.

OoooO

That something was up wasn't the question, but Loki was stunned to see the two people he loved most in all the realms standing in the Stark's living room. And for one glorious moment, he thought it was all over. He felt dizzy and confused and he wanted more than anything else to just touch her to make sure she was really there. "Mother?"

Enfolded in her arms, the perfume of her hair overwhelmed him to the point of tears starting in his eyes. How many centuries had she held him thus? Whispering her love for him into his ear? "I missed you so much."

A pain tore at his chest, causing his breath to catch. But how many times had Loki dreamed this only to wake up bitterly disappointed? He stepped back and studied her closely. You could feel in a dream, but as he ran his hands down his mother's arms he wondered if he would have placed so much detail in her dream garb. Also, all the other times his mother had been delighted to see him. Her eyes had shone with love and tenderness and her smile had been radiant.

But this time her eyes were stained, her smile forced and her entire manner uneasy. If this was a dream, surely he was not so sick as to imagine a time when his mother wouldn't be happy to see him after a long absence.

"Am I to be free now? Is my sentence complete?" Loki asked suppressing his fears, mask firmly in place, but totally at odds with the almost desperate note in his voice while he slowly released his mother's hands, letting them slip from his fingertips.

"We've come to take you home. We missed you so much." Frigga told him smiling sadly at Loki.

“Ah.” There was a long pause. Frigga was perfectly still, but Thor shifted slightly, seemingly unable to keep still. Tony didn’t have that problem. In fact his problem was just the opposite. He stood there frozen into place and doubted if he could have moved if he had to.

“So I’m to go home but as a prisoner?” Loki asked as he studied his mother’s face intently. His voice completely controlled, almost disinterested.

“I’m afraid so my son.”

“Will I at least learn why I am a prisoner?”

Loki’s eyes moved from his mother to Thor to Tony and back again, his emotions flickering perhaps in his eyes, but nowhere else.

“I’m not sure Loki.” Mother replied gently, lifting a hand, which he evaded, trying unsuccessfully to touch his cheek. “When the All Father deems the time correct, I am sure he will speak with you about this.”

“I think if I am to remain a prisoner, I would prefer to be one on Midgard mother.” Loki’s tone was lighter, almost conversational. He tilted his head and let a polite smile stray across his face. “Not that I would not miss you of course.”

“Brother it is time for you to return home and earn your true freedom.” Thor said a bit too heartily, the booming cheerfulness of it making Loki’s eyes darkened in suppressed anger.

“Earn it back Thor?” He asked quietly, clenching his jaw tight, he managing to keep the shakiness out of his voice. “How dear brother am I supposed to earn it back, when I don’t even know how why I lost it in the first place.”

Not totally oblivious Thor decided to try another tack, “Surely you want to earn your magic back brother.” He asked, the heartiness in his voice only slightly strained.

“No. Not if I have to return to Asgard. And again, how can I earn that back when I don’t know why it was originally suppressed,” The younger god said turning his face away from his brother.

“Loki!”

“No Thor.”

“But brother...”

“No Thor.” Loki said, firmly over his shoulder, refusing, perhaps childishly, to turn. “I would rather spend the rest of my days on the mud ball that is Midgard without magic rather than return to a realm where my talents have never been appreciated because I am not primarily known as a sword swinging buffoon.”

“But Loki--”

“But nothing Thor.” This time, Loki did turn towards the Thunder god, neatly sidestepping an attempt by the queen to grasp his upper arm. “I can kill someone as quick as the next idiot but apparently because I can also do math without using my fingers and toes I am some kind of egri. And let us not even discuss what they whisper behind my back because I bothered to learn how to use magic.”

Tony sighed sadly as a scowl flickered across Loki’s face so fast that he almost missed it; there

was just something about Thor that was bringing out the stubborn side of the trickster.

Taking advantage of his shift in attention, Frigga stepped close and wrapped her arm in his, “If you are content here, I would that you could stay, but that is not possible my darling, I’m afraid you have to return.”

“Besides brother, you’ll be back with your family and friends, surely you miss that. Oh and father has agreed to let you stay in your own rooms and not a prison cell. Surely will be better than staying here.”

“Seriously Thor, the chance to sleep in my own room is supposed to make up for all the rest?” Loki asked sarcastically, his lips curling down disdainfully, even as despair pooled in his belly. “You truly are clueless. How exactly is it going to be better? Will I be physically attacked by a better class of rapists?” Both Æsir gasped, but Frigga shot a hard glare at Tony.

“I have friends here,” Loki continued, ignoring his mother’s distress. “Real friends not like those louts that follow you around all day. And further more Thor, I have the respect of many of Midgard’s scientific community, you know, those people who *can* do higher math without using their toes. Just last month I threw a party and invited several of the younger--”

“You mean Stark had a party.” Thor corrected his brother, obviously upset, but in true older brother fashion unwilling to let a sibling misspeak pass. Frigga merely tossed a discreetly irritated look at her older son. She should have saved herself the effort it took her for the attempted subtlety, since Thor didn’t notice it at all.

“No you dolt. I meant exactly what I said. I have my own apartment, I had a party. You know, food, drink, music, intelligent conversation with likeminded people.” Loki paused a moment looking pensive, arm twitching in an unsuccessful attempt to discreetly dislodge the Queen’s grip from his arm. He continued with a contemptuous sniff. “Or mostly likely you don’t. After all your main companions are Siff, Hogun, Fandral and Volstagg. Definitely no fear of an intelligent conversation with that bunch in the room.”

“Loki!”

“Boys.” Frigga called, overriding Thor’s admonishment with a ‘we will not be going there’ voice. “I don’t think we need to continue this line of discussion do we?”

“But you would not if those *‘friends’* knew what crimes you had committed here brother,” Thor said quietly.

Shocked, Loki jerked backwards away from what was clearly a telling blow. Lips pressed in a hard line and just a bit wide eyed, the youngest Odinson pulled away from Frigga, forgoing subtlety and jerking his arm free at last.

Thor’s quiet riposte surprised the hell out of Tony since he didn’t know that Thor could do anything quietly. And besides the comment was a bit of a masterstroke, and frankly Tony hadn’t known Thor had that in him either. As much as Tony hated to admit that Loki’s big bro was right... Well he was. Very few of the people that Loki had been associating with, both in the bars and at the conferences, would have tolerated his company if they had known who he actually was.

“Thor! You forget yourself!” Frigga snapped, before turning her attention to a suddenly hollow eyed Loki. “Come darling, I need to speak with you in private for a few moments. Perhaps we could go to this apartment of yours?”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.

They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Why now?

Chapter Summary

Loki and Tony reach a new understanding in their relationship. Also Head Cannon examined and questions answered.... And that's just in the Note section. :)

Chapter Notes

I've received several comments and PM's with these two questions, so there are the answers for everyone.

Q – Exactly how old is everybody right now?

A - At this moment in the story Clint is late, late forties. You can only be knocked on your ass without armor so many times at that age, which is why he is no longer an Avenger. Thanks to Frigga's rune Tony is physically an extremely healthy thirty six, thirty-seven year old. He was thirty nine when she placed it on him, but the reversal of some of this underlying health issues shaved an extra few years off. As far as the rest of the world knows Tony Stark is an extremely healthy forty-six year old. For the sake of argument if Frigga continues to maintain his Rune is it possible that he could get to the point where everyone he knows dies? Yepper. Fortunately Steve, Natasha and Bruce would still be around for a goodly while. As well as Thor and Loki. And yes, someone will notice eventually he is not aging, but Tony has a cover story with his extremis research.

Q - What is the point in a punishment if the person being punished doesn't know or understand what they did that deserved punishment? Loki doesn't know why he is being imprisoned, so its use as a punishment wouldn't do anything.

A - In Movie Verse I have never got the idea that Odin is overly concerned with making sense or being fair if it was not politically expedient. So for the premise of this story I went with that. I would say that from Odin's point of view the fact that Asgard and Jotenheim and the Realms in general perceive Loki as being punished is what is currently important to him.

On Earth while the people with a need to know are aware Loki was compelled in the NYC incident, he is still responsible for the New Mexico fiasco and of course whatever incident started that up in Viking Land.

Make no mistake, Loki is guilty of some serious sh*t even if he isn't quite aware of what it was. No he did not usurp the throne, but yes he did send the Destroyer to Earth which is poor form diplomatically at the least and endangered the heir to the throne which is treason no matter how you slice it. The endangerment being from Odin's point of view the more important of those two actions. Despite the fact that Loki was controlling the destroyer from Hliðskjálf: Odin's high all seeing throne and recalled it before it could blast Thor to smithereens, he is still guilty, however unintentionally, of miscalculating and causing Thor's mortal body far more harm than it could cope with. In addition to terrorizing the town. (Although in my personal opinion Heimdall and the

F*cker Four are responsible for precipitating the whole mess with their Treason.)

He did endanger the queen with his scheme to get rid of Laufrey. A final solution indeed, but one which while well intentioned did remove a KNOWN power that frankly had just been sulking for centuries. This opened up a power vacuum in Jotunheim that could result in someone much more vigorous gaining control.

And finally, his little melt down using the BiFrost to attack Jotunheim.... Again while this was a possible decision within the realm of his powers as king, it was a bit of a political sticky wicket as the other realms would have stroked at the total destruction of any realm, even Jotunheim. And may well have banded together in fear. And it did cause a major public works project to be destroyed to the detriment of Asgard's control over the Nine Realms. Yes Thor is the one that did it, but it could be argued that he was only trying to prevent that political fall out. Which I personally doubt he even thought of but that is the way it was going to be played to the public to save face for Asgard. (Frigga did say that the Æsir barely consider people Loki and Thor's age to be adults. These, like Odin insisted of Thor's attack on Jotunheim, were the actions of a child. Unfortunately Loki is one of those really scary smart determined kid who creeps out the Adults around him because his attempt at retaliation had much more permanent and far reaching effects.)

Now, Odin would have no problems as far as fairness was concerned with any of what he decided for Loki's punishment IF.... IF.... He had also held the others, Sif, Fandral, Hogun, Volstagg, Heimdall and to a lesser extent Thor publically accountable for their actions also. But here again political expediency carried the day and those issues were conveniently swept under the rug lest they publicize to the other realms that Asgard in general and Odin in particular was losing his grip. Better one melt down of godly proportions by a powerful entity, rather than a long string of treasons and misconduct by numerous high ranking members of his court.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 51 - Why now?

“Smooth move there Pikachu.” Tony said as Frigga chivied her youngest son into the elevator.

“All these years we kept the secret and you almost let it out. Why didn’t you just tell him the rest?”

Thor looked abashed. “He would not have heard, the geas would have prevented it.”

“No, he wouldn’t have, but how many leading comments and blank spaces before he’s able to assemble the missing parts? Just to avoid stressing him, we’ve always let him assume that he was here mainly because of a crime in Asgard.” Shaking his head, Tony turned away with a side-glance at Thor. “He is aware that he was attacked more than once while in prison, you know.”

Thor stiffened, looking incredulously at Tony who shrugged.

“Hey, I couldn’t get into the specifics... Obviously. But why do you think he’s been so well behaved here? I’m pretty sure I don’t have to tell you that it is not in his nature to accept defeat without retaliation as a rule.” Tony reached up and patted Thor on the shoulder. And secretly he wondered if Odin had overlooked taking that little personality quirk into consideration. Loki seemed to be the king of ‘doubling down’ after all.

“Hey. You want a drink big guy? I don’t know about you, but I could really use one.”

“How?” Pulling a frown, Thor tilted his head, almost as if he was having trouble seeing Tony.

“Why would you tell him about the attacks?”

“He’s not stupid you know. And let’s just say there was a close call or two. I couldn’t tell him outright, but I did managed to convince him that it wasn’t safe for him to be back in Asgard using creative story telling. I also managed to let him know *why* it wasn’t safe and why he needed to behave or he was going to have to go back to that.” Tony avoided Thor’s accusing look by planting himself behind his bar, rummaging around until he found something decent to drink that wasn’t too expensive. There was no sense bringing a fine sipping whiskey out only to have Thor start quaffing it by the bottle. Thunder pants drank Oban Highland Single Malt like it was kid’s koolaide. Besides it would take more than a few bottles before the blonde deity would even feel it... A chance that Tony was not going to offer to him, not wanting to get in trouble with the Queen for getting her oldest soused. Besides, sober Thor was already a set of fingernails down the blackboard of Loki’s sensibilities. Tony shuddered to think how the Trickster would react to an even more tactless, drunken version of his older brother. He filled two shot glasses with mid-shelf scotch and slid one down to the big blonde Asgardian.

“So... How exactly is this going to work? Did something happen that made it safe for Loki to go home? You guys aren’t worried he might be attacked again?” Tony was hoping perhaps he could blow holes in whatever plan they had and keep Loki in New York a bit longer.

Thor tore his eyes away from the hall that his mother and brother had disappeared down.

“Where’d they go Jarv?” Tony asked.

“Mister Odinson and Queen Frigga are indeed headed down to his floor sir.”

“So...”

Thor slumped tiredly on the bar. “As much as I look forward to seeing my brother again, I must admit this plan causes me some uneasiness.”

“So he might get jumped again?” Tony asked incredulously. “What kind of fucked up shit is that? Didn’t they catch the people who did it the last time?”

“I hope so. As far as we know, all of his attackers were identified, caught and punished, however mother still feels that it is unsafe for him to come home. Nonetheless, the All Father and the council insisted. Loki is to come home and start repaying his debt to Asgard by repairing the BiFrost.”

Well at least Thor looked guilty over that part, which he should since he was the one who broke the damn Rainbow Highway in the first place, Tony thought growing angry.

“Well I hope you have plans on keeping a better eye on him than you did before big guy. After all he could have died the last time.”

“Mother has insisted that they provide guards to keep him safe...” Thor almost whispered.

“Uh huh.” Tony scoffed. “Safe? Like the guards did the last time?”

Thor’s face flushed. “Until all of his powers are restored, he will be on house arrest not in prison. And while his guards will be paid for by the treasury, my mother will hire them from amongst those sworn to her family on Vanaheimr. She will personally choose each guard and they will be

sworn to answer only to her. Loki will have at least three guards with him at all times. Even when he is in his rooms, two will be guarding his door, but a third will be in his private quarters even when he sleeps.”

“Uh huh. And your dad is okay with this?” Tony asked skeptically. From what he had heard over the years, Odin did not take kindly to anyone, not even Frigga telling him what to do.

Thor hung his head looking sadly at Tony. “Well. They were rather loud while discussing it.”

OoooO

Loki swept out of the living room, not even pausing to see if Frigga was following. Smacking the down button much harder than he needed to, he stood there; head tucked defensively as he stared intently at the floor. He refused to acknowledge the presence of the woman who stopped beside him, the woman who had comforted him for centuries. Even though she brushed soft fingers across his cheek as she had hundreds of times before, this time the gesture brought no comfort.

Wrack his brain though he might, he could not think of what in the Nine Realms he could have done that would cause him to be loathed by the general population of Midgard. He had thought that perhaps an unsuccessful escape to their realm that he no longer remembered might have angered their guardian forces. But he had always assumed that any real danger he was in on Midgard would have been due to him being a displaced... And obviously disgraced son of Odin. After all, unlike the Vanir, the Æsir were not a very forgiving people. And as he knew all too well, they never, ever forgave a slight. His lips twitched as he considered for perhaps the umpteenth time what a counterproductive trait holding grudges was, in a population that lived for tens of thousands of years.

Riding in silence to his floor, Loki’s sidelong glance was enough to let him know that his mother was not happy. But with who was the question that he couldn’t answer. Thor, obviously. Odin, most likely. Him... Loki suppressed the urge to sigh. Him, most definitely. How many times had she told him not to cause trouble? Not that he often had in the past. Or at least not much that could be traced back to him. But if she had placed him here for his own protection, he had to have caused trouble on an unprecedented scale. But surely nothing he had done on Midgard would have provoked prison guards to abuse him. He was still a prince after all. But they had. More than once, if Stark’s oblique comments were to be believed. Add that to the fact that nothing he would have done on Asgard would have caused him to be hated on Midgard.

The corners of his mouth twitched down momentarily as he fought back a scowl. With the way his luck was running he probably transgressed against Álfheimr or Jotunheim as well.

His apartment was as well appointed as every other part of Stark Tower, but it was a relatively modest size compared to all the other living spaces in the building. By the standards of the penthouse, or indeed Loki’s own royal quarters, it was tiny. In the palace, quarters of this size might have been assigned to a favored personal servant. This meant that his mother couldn’t waste too much time asking him to give her a tour.

Leaning against his desk, trying to appear at ease and taking great care not to fold his arms defensively in front of him, Loki cocked his head to one side. “We have established that you won’t tell me why I am here. Which makes no sense at all since I can’t repent what I don’t remember, but then little in Asgard makes sense. However, would it be too much to ask exactly how long my term of punishment is for?”

OoooO

“Loki, do you have a minute? Can I talk to you?” Banner said, as he entered Loki’s small apartment. Loki was sitting despondently on the couch, brushing his hair with the brush that Eir had left all those years ago to comfort him. The doctor noticed his slightly red eyes and looked away uncomfortably. “So, Tony called. I heard you were heading home tonight and I just wanted to stop over and say goodbye and to say thank you.”

The god fastened his long hair in to a low, double banded pony tail and proceeded to quickly braid it. Only after he had twisted a third band across the end and placed his brush carefully on the end table beside him did he look over at the doctor.

“Thank you?” He asked softly. “I rather think that I am the one who needs to thank you Doctor Banner.”

“No thanks on your part are necessary, I assure you. Thanks to you being here, I met your mother and that made it possible for me to...” The doctor trailed off embarrassed. “Umm, control myself, to not have to worry about being a danger to others. For the first time since this happened I was able to connect with someone without worrying that I might accidentally kill them. That means a lot to me and I’m grateful that taking care of you has given me that chance.”

“This is the Ross woman?” Loki asked, eyeing the quiet jubilation seeping out of the normally reserved Doctor Banner.

“No.” His smile faded for a second, “That would have never worked out. Her father would have never allowed it.” The lights in his eyes grew soft. “Her name is Janis. She’s the manager of a coffee shop by my house. But please don’t mention it to Tony.” Banner looked up alarmed. “Jarvis, you either. Please. Tony would never shut up about it.”

“I promise that it will be our secret Doctor Banner,” The AI chimed in. Loki nodded his assent.

“We have an understanding. We’re planning on getting a place together when her kids go off to college. Without having to stay under the radar so much, I’ve been doing some biological chemistry research for NYU-Poly. Between my body of work and ability to attract external funding mostly thanks to referrals from Tony and SHIELD I don’t think I’ll have any trouble getting tenure.”

They sat in silence a moment before Banner lowered his head, peering out sadly over the tops of his glasses. “You know, one day you may remember other stuff about me. When you do, I also hope you’ll remember that I am really grateful to you and your mom.” He laughed ruefully, “Despite how we first met, if it hadn’t been for you I would never had gotten the chance to work with Tony, or meet your mom who fixed my problem with the *‘Other Guy’*.”

Banner shrugged and held out his hand to Loki. “Hell if it hadn’t been for the money I was paid to take care of you, I wouldn’t have had the income cushion it took to get out from under SHIELD. So thanks. And if you ever need anything that I might be able to help with, let me know okay?”

Taking the hand extended to him, Loki shook it. “You are most welcome Doctor Banner. And thank you for the offer of assistance, I appreciate it.”

“You’re welcome. I think.” He said, releasing Loki’s hand and wagged an admonishing finger at him. “But don’t you dare ever show up here again like you did the first time. Got that?”

“I will endeavor not to get that injured again.” Loki assured him dryly with a lopsided smile. “And thank you for taking such good care of me when I was sick.”

“You’re welcome.” Bruce rubbed his hands together as he looked around the room.

“But hey, I’m going to get out of your way and let you get back to your packing.” Banner started backing towards the door. Just before he passed through it, he said, “You take care of yourself. You’re doing so well, I’d hate for you to get sick again.”

“I’ll try.” Loki answered, realizing that he would quite miss the quiet doctor.

“That’s all we can ever do.” Bruce said with one last look over his shoulder as he eased out the door.

OoooO

Frigga’s eyes were suspiciously damp when she returned to the penthouse living room alone. Deflecting Thor questioning looks by telling him to go warn Heimdall that they would be leaving soon, she shooed her eldest out towards the patio with instructions to stay there for a few minutes while she had a private chat with Tony.

Thor had no sooner cleared the terrace doors when she whirled vengefully on Tony.

“You told Loki of the attacks.” She stated obviously livid but keeping her voice disconcertingly calm. Tony resisted the urge to look away as she steadily regarded him. Everything about her was composed, detached even, but Tony could just hear an underlying note of grimness in her voice and see a hint of steel in her blue eyes. “The All Father went to great lengths to spare him that knowledge, yet you told him. May I ask why?”

“Yeah. Umm, about that. There may have been a minor incident or two that were perhaps a little more serious than the quarterly report stated.

“Oh?” The Queen of Asgard probed coldly. The woman currently regarding him was not the warm, fuzzy blanket wrapping, nose kissing Loki-momma, this was Frigga, Queen of Asgard, channeling her inner Odin-one-eye-in-a-really-cranky-mood.

“Yeah.” Tony rubbed his chest, a nervous habit left over from his bad old arc reactor days. “I didn’t want to get him in trouble up in Viking land... But I really needed him to modify a few behaviors or your husband might have had to haul him back.”

“So Anthony, Son of Stark, telling him about this heinous violation was for his own good?” She asked skeptically.

Wincing internally over the Son of Stark crap, which he was pretty certain she was using to purposely annoy him, Tony managed to maintain a neutral expression and worked in a nonchalant shrug that he totally wasn’t feeling. “Well yeah.”

Frigga’s lips tightened into a flat line and her... call it a glare... Intensified.

Ah shit.

“Look. As much trouble as he had here in the beginning, I figured Loki knowing about that stuff was a lot better than him continuing to pull shit that might get him dragged back to Fairyland. Where he would not be just hearing about being attacked but possibly actually get attacked again.” Tony took a deep breath but refused to back down, “Which frankly I wouldn’t wish on my worst enemy. Which he isn’t any more by the way.” And despite Tony’s voice taking on more than a bit of attitude, Frigga seemed to thaw a bit. “Honestly I did it for his own good. I’m sorry if that upsets you, but at the time it was the only option I had.”

The searching look that Tony endured for the next minute or two was not the worst that the inventor had ever experienced, but it was definitely in his top ten. Fortunately, Frigga seemed to come to a decision that did not involve her calling Thor back in to smite him, so it was all good.

“So.”

Tony did not rub the back of his neck nervously. It was just itchy.

“You’ll be leaving soon?” he asked, calling on his inner Stark to keep his tone light and conversational as if he couldn’t care one way or the other. Which he didn’t really. Or at least not that he could admit to in the current circumstances.

Frigga didn’t answer, but she did regally lift her head in assent. And Tony could totally see that Odin wasn’t the only one the Trickster had copied mannerisms from.

“Ah.” One single syllable that in no way indicated the pain pooling in his chest. He took a deep settling breath. “You know, maybe I should go make sure Lokmeister know he needs to finish up his packing.”

“That would be most kind of you Anthony. Please tell Loki that we are waiting for him.”

She gave Tony a sadly sweet smile, totally opposite the anger just moment earlier. She then reached out and wordlessly asked for his hand.

Okay, so he knew Frigga had him on a contingency plan, but any future duties and compensation would be detailed at the time that was invoked. Not normally the type of deal that Tony was used to agreeing to, but he really hadn’t wanted to get in a pissing match trying to nail down specifics with the Queen of Space Viking’s legal team. Besides, seven years of absolutely perfect health, so good his unbelieving doctor sometimes ran tests twice, was an unbeatable perk of having assisted the queen. As was recovering from injuries so well he’d run afoul of SHIELD while trying to hide it. Couple both of those with the fact that he hadn’t noticed any more grey in his hair or any new laugh lines since Frigga had declared him a servitor. That did seem to indicate that the promised non-aging thing had occurred.

Not that Tony was vain or concerned about getting older or anything.

So while he was worried about how bad he would feel losing his bestie, Tony had to admit that being Queen Frigga’s best boy had tangible physical benefits that he could not have gotten another way. Some of the phrasing from Frigga’s lawyer had hinted that the queen might continue to maintain him for several more years just in case, but it wasn’t carved in stone anywhere. Certainly not in the documents he has signed. But he supposed she was as worried about Loki’s safety as Thor was and wanted to keep Tony hale and healthy as a backup plan.

“I am deeply appreciative of the service you have provided to me and mine Anthony,” Frigga said, formally laying her palm, minus the glowing stone that Thor usually used, onto his wrist and beginning the rune-charging light show.

Tony looked up from his wrist to see her blue eyes regarding him as if they could read every thought that passed through his mind. “While we can’t tarry too much longer, I think we can spare a few minutes if you would like to go say farewell to my son while he gathers what is important to him.”

OoooO

While it was not possible to be physically tired after being recharged, mentally Tony was whupped.

He propped one foot behind him against the elevator's wainscoting and leaned back, allowing his head to drop tiredly onto his chest.

"Jarvis, how you coming on my list?" he asked as the elevator took him down to Loki's floor.

"Everything is ready sir, I will have it placed in the elevator while you say goodbye to Mister Odinson."

"Good. Great."

"The Tower certainly will not be the same when he is gone will it sir?"

Tony just huffed. Not deeming that a comment that obvious deserved an answer. A silent minute later he exited the elevator and knocked twice lightly on Loki's door before entering the apartment.

Several items were stacked on the chair nearest the door, obviously stuff that Loki intended to take with him. It was sad really, having only such a small pile of belongings to show for having spent seven plus years living in one place. Hell Tony took more with him for a weekend getaway.

But this wasn't going to be a weekend trip, this was permanent.

That was the thought that had been tearing at his gut all day. Tony didn't have many real friends and it was killing him to think that he was going to lose one of the four he had. Not just moving, but moving so far away that he would never see him again. Further out of touch than even Bruce had managed before Tony hooked him up with an untraceable satellite phone. Loki was leaving him and going to a place that even Tony with all his technology couldn't call, or text or fucking even send god damned snail mail to.

And as sorry as Tony felt for himself, he also was just sick with worry about what might happen to Loki when he returned to Fairyland. After all, last time he'd been in Asgard, they'd almost killed him. Who was to say it couldn't still happen, despite Queen Frigga's arrangements. It had happened the first time, despite his father being the King of everything and his brother being a freaking force of nature that swung a magic hammer.

Unlike Tony's penthouse, unless he had company, Loki's apartment was almost always quiet. The god was never one for background noise and this last day was no different. Late afternoon sunlight flooded in, casting a golden glow upon everything in the room, including of course Loki staring pensively gazing out across the city skyline, his fingertips resting lightly on his open laptop.

"Would it be too much to ask that someone clear out the items I'm leaving behind Stark?" Loki tapped a delicate finger roll on the laptop's keyboard before reluctantly pulling his hand away. That hand now fisted tightly at his side, he at last turned his head to look over his shoulder at Tony. I'm afraid I don't have the time or supplies to properly clear this space."

"Whoa, wait a minute. Why isn't your laptop packed? And your ebook? I know you won't get NetFlix or Whisper-net in Space Viking land but they still will have *some* entertainment value."

Loki shrugged. "Indeed, but Asgard's power supplies are not compatible, and I would not be able to command the resources to make them so."

"Yeah. Totally not listening to that excuse Bambi. Get your fucking gear together, don't forget your damn power cords. You're not leaving this shit behind to tempt me. 'cause you know I would be totally trying to hack your stuff. Besides you are taking all this stuff and thinking about me every time you use the damn things."

“Trust me, to think of you and the time I have had here would not be a hardship Tony. I daresay it will be the only bright spot I have to contemplate for many years to come.”

“I already intended to send you back with a new set of gear, complete with a solar and crank recharging station, might I add. But you might as well take your old stuff too, since replacements might be a bit impossible to come by. And you *will* think of me when you use it.”

“I just told you that I would remember you even without it Tony. Have no doubt about that.” Loki assured him, while stowing cords and hardware into his bag as he had been instructed to.

Tony grinned. “I am totally getting the whole Silver Tongue nickname now.”

Titling his head slightly, Loki’s face crinkled in amusement and his voice took on a teasing lilt. “Are you Stark? Even when I haven’t demonstrated my main claim to that title?”

No!

“Oh you did not just say that to me when I have to face your mother and brother in less than five minutes time!”

The god then turned back to the window, avoiding eye contact, standing there all tall and proud and broken.

How Loki could be so strong when he was so very, very broken had always puzzled Tony. No matter what Thor thought, Tony didn’t believe for a minute that it had been Loki’s last few years in Asgard that turned him into the monster of New York and the attempted destroyer of Frost Giant land. Hell in his opinion, the thought of having to deal with an autocratic All Father and the eternally oblivious Thor would have been enough to fuck up anyone’s head. Add a lifetime of lies and having to deal with an entire society of jocks and Tony thought it was a wonder that the guy hadn’t snapped centuries earlier.

As always, Tony’s mind shied away from the knowledge that he and the god were so much alike in that respect. In response to a real threat, both of them believed core deep that enemies should not only be stopped, but annihilated so that they could never, ever threaten you again.

And didn’t that type of thinking make people nervous.

“Come on you,” he said, sighing to himself. Coming up behind the deity, whose back was held impossibly straight as Tony folded his arms around him. Loki was so damn proud and strong, but not tempered, and that was his problem. Loki had a brittle strength and one too many blows could shatter it. And oh didn’t Tony know how that felt. When the item that was broken was you... taking away the bad parts could never repair the whole. All of it, the good and the bad needed to be glued back together. And sometimes, if you were very lucky, broken things could be stronger than the original. Tony was proof of that, although it had taken him many years to learn it.

Knowing the god wouldn’t turn, Tony slid around until he was in front of Loki, who was still had his sight fixed on a distant point of the skyline. So Tony just hugged him, laying his forehead against Loki’s shoulder. They stood like that for several long moments, Tony breathing in the smell of his god, before long strong arms came up around him and a head lowered to rest on top of Tony’s and fine tremors starting running through Loki’s body, followed shortly by the occasional hitched breath.

“I’m really wish you could stay here, me and Jarvis and Pepper are really going to miss you. You know that don’t you buddy?”

“Mother is well experienced at getting around a geas when she chooses to do so.” Loki whispered hoarsely into his hair. “Do you know everyone I’ve met here will be dead before I am free to come back?”

And there it was, the thought that had been haunting Tony all day, yanked front and center where he couldn’t ignore it any longer. They would all be dead before the god’s sentence was up. In fact the only way they would ever see Loki again was if horrible happened in Fairyland and Frigga exercised her future services clause with Tony to once again remove the godling from dire peril. Having the god beaten almost to death was really not something he wished for, no matter how much he wanted him to return. However the really scary part was if it did happen again, would he even still be alive to offer Loki sanctuary? And if he wasn’t what options would Frigga have then?

And no, Tony was not going to cry like some god damn chick watching a sappy date flick. He was Tony Fucking Stark and he didn’t cry. Okay so he fully intended to spend all night worrying for the dark god’s safety and getting drunk, but he wasn’t going to cry. That was Pepper’s job; fuck knows Tony paid her good money to take care of all the touchy-feely stuff he didn’t wasn’t emotionally capable of dealing with. So she could damn well do his crying for him too.

Someone had to, said the forlorn voice in the back of his head.

Tightening his hold as a fresh set of tremors ran through the god, Tony mentally cursed Odin and his bastard council. They let the god stay down here just long enough to learn to be happy and then decided to yank him back. Leaving him here long enough for Tony—

“I shall miss you most of all Tony. Not since I was a youngling have I been so blessed with such uncomplicated companionship. You have overall been a good friend,” Loki whispered in his ear. “I am sure had we more time, you would have been so much more.”

What!

Tony started, looking up in to slightly pink rimmed, yet now tenderly amused green eyes. Loki bent down to kiss Tony’s forehead and then pulled away, holding the inventor at arm’s length.

Wait!

“You called me Tony.” He said accusingly. “How many times have I asked you not call me Stark and today’s the day you decided to listen?”

“Oh no you don’t!” He exclaimed, hotly poking a hard index finger against the god’s chest as Loki obediently stifled a watery chuckle.

“Oh yeah, yuk it you bastard. Years, I’ve asked you to call me Tony and you refused. Years you’ve been creating PR nightmares for me, which I might not have even minded, if I had actually banged you and you were actually my boyfriend. Which you weren’t by your own choice, I just want to point out. And now, when your MOM is upstairs and it’s fifteen minutes before you disappear from my life forever, NOW you call me Tony and tell me I actually had a shot at you?” He glowered as an impossibly wide smile blossomed across the god’s face as Loki’s eyes lit up in unholy amusement.

Totally, totally pissing Tony off.

“I’m fucking being torn apart here,” Tony shouted, unfortunately sounding more emo than a man his age should sound. “I’m going out of my fucking mind, worried about your safety, knowing I

can't do anything to help, frantic over losing one of my best friends for fucking forever and you are pulling this shit now? You couldn't have done this earlier? Why?"

And no. For the record his eyes weren't getting damp.

And then, didn't the god of Pretentious Brattiness give him the most wide eyed impish look Tony had ever seen on the face of an adult male. A look that would have been breathtakingly, heart-droppingly adorable if the god had been a seventeen year old girl... Or Tony totally didn't want to kill the bastard.

"I could have, but where's the fun in that?" Loki's brows rose, inviting Tony to share the pitch black humor of their situation.

Tony stared up at the god in dumbfounded amazement. Just as he was going to start cussing up a blue streak, Loki swooped down and totally owned him.

Immobilizing Tony with those freakishly long arms of his, Loki pulled Tony up into a kiss that robbed the playboy of every bit of air in his body... And every functioning brain cell that he still possessed. One hand threaded through his hair, firmly cradling the back of Tony's head and guiding it to an angle of the god's liking, while the other wrapped around his waist lifting Tony up onto his toes and plastering him against the toned sculpted perfection of the Loki's dancer body.

Someone moaned, but Tony was so overloaded by the sensation of heat between the two of them that he wasn't sure if it was him or Loki.

But it was probably him, because fucking hell if this guy couldn't have turned a statue into an actual human being with the life giving properties of his kiss. Who knew how many years of repressed passion and illicit lust Loki was pouring into Tony? It was like a sweet poison, igniting every vein in his body, burning every nerve ending and making Tony want to worship the god until the very end of his days.

More it was a revelation of just how skilled his ebony haired god was. He was Tony fucking Stark and he had had more people trying to impress him with their kissing than Iron Man had twitter fans. And he had never felt this... Orgasmic... During a kiss. It was only when he felt like he was in danger of blacking out from lack of oxygen that Tony reluctantly struggled to break away while still voicing a protesting whine at the loss of contact.

"Oh geeze." Tony panted, several long moments later still trying to catch his breath and convince various embarrassingly aroused parts of him to stand down.

"Why?" He wheezed, when he could finally think coherently.

"Why not." Loki replied, equally breathless as he touched a damp forehead to Tony's.

"I couldn't have done anything about it while I was your prisoner no matter... What. But I hope that you will *always* remember this and perhaps think of me fondly."

Lust blown green eyes locked on to Tony's. "I would like that. To know that there was one person in all the realms who desired me even when I had nothing of real substance to offer."

Pulling back only as much as necessary, his hand leaving the playboy's waist so his long index finger could stroke down Tony's lips. The touch was so close to Tony's dream that he shivered from the memory.

Gorgeously greedy eyes watched the finger's progress, pupils widening as it pressed on the

playboy's lower lip, tugging it slightly open. "To know that you might occasionally think of me with affection will be a great comfort to me." Eyes glistening the god bit his lip, pausing a moment. "I would not have my last memory of you, nor yours of me being sad. I know if we had met differently I would have stopped at nothing to possess you body and soul..."

A dark thrill curled through Tony at the whole déjà vu-ness of Loki's revelation, touching on their past history and exciting parts of Tony's psyche that perhaps were better left unexplored.

"And to be possessed by you in turn." The deity whispered.

Okay, Tony thought with breathless irreverence. *Whoever didn't name Loki the God of Insane Hotness was totally clueless*. Tony was willing to bet it was Odin Ass Father.

Loki sighed again, bushing his finger softly one last time against Tony's lip. "Come now, my mother is doubtless waiting for us."

"You suck you know that?" He mumbled at Loki.

Feather light and so soft that Tony was afraid to even breathe, Loki's lips ghosted across his temples, eyelids and lips one last time, until with a soft moan the god wrenched himself away. "Thousands of years from now, I *will* mourn that we could not be more to each other. And never doubt that I will always remember you Tony Stark."

Chapter End Notes

Sooooo.... What ya think?

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.

They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Homeward Bound

Chapter Summary

Frigga & Thor almost have a panic attack. Twice.

Chapter Notes

What do you think of the title graphic I finally did? Notice anything odd about it? :D

So, winding down but panic not... I have 70k of the sequel finished and will kick it off the week after this arc finishes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 52 - Homeward Bound

It took everything Loki had to start a light-hearted conversation with Stark on the way up to the penthouse. But he thought that he pulled it off fairly convincingly. After all he had no wish to leave the mortal in distress from losing a friend. So he called upon centuries of practice to provide him with an expression that would mask his feelings.

Truth be told, which it never would be if he could help it at all, Loki was scared. He was scared of returning to the Realm Eternal as a helpless cripple. Stripped of strength and stripped of magic. Worst perhaps was that he was returning to the callously murderous inhabitants of the capital without any knowledge of his last four years of interactions with them. The loss of any one of the three would make his survival in the courts extremely difficult, but the loss of all strength, magic and knowledge? All at the same time? Loki prospects upon returning were not looking very good at all.

And because the Norns had decided that nothing in his life was ever going to be easy, there was Stark. In the beginning he had deemed it necessary to his safety to try to ensnare the mortal's affection. After all he was alone in a strange realm and Stark's moods were often volatile. And Stark had responded marvelously to his overtures, better than Loki could have ever imagined. So much so that Loki felt...

Sentiment.

Loki could not afford sentiment. The Nine Realms taught harsh lessons, chewing up and spitting out those who failed to learn them. So even if the words were like ash in his mouth, tainting his leave taking with the jailor who had become his friend he would take no chances. After all, he was not Skuld, he had to make his own contingencies plans. No one else would do it for him.

And so he did. No matter how much those backup strategies tainted the sweetness of his one real interaction with the intriguing little mortal.

As they entered the living room, Thor was looking out the window, watching the sun touch the

tops of the nearest buildings. He looked over when he heard their steps on the marble floor.

Adjusting the messenger bag on his shoulder, Loki ran a hand wearily through his hair. Or rather he tried to but was stopped by the fact that it was braided.

Braided!

“Thor hold this,” he said, blindly thrusting his message bag at the large blonde. “Mother, I’ll be right back. I just need to check something in the kitchen a minute.”

“Loki?” Tony’s voice followed him, as he darted up the ramp and ran into the kitchen.

“Where are they...” He muttered to himself, pulling drawers open riffling hurriedly through the contents and then slamming the drawer shut before opening the next one.

“If I could be of service Mister Odinson?”

“Yes, perhaps--” Loki’s paused looking into the miscellaneous cutlery drawer, and then his hand dove in to snatch up a large pair of kitchen shears. “Never mind Jarvis, I found them.”

Mindful that he was running out of time, Loki reached back and separated the two hair ties at the top of his braid. Feeling carefully with his fingers so he didn’t cut either of them, he placed the open scissors between the ties.

He paused for a moment, then setting his jaw in a determined line, he began to saw away at the long braid with the shears.

Kitchen shears were not what one normally would use to cut a thick coil of hair, but fortunately like everything else in Stark’s personal kitchen, they were of the best quality. The almost brand new shears were very sharp and Loki was very determined. Though it took longer than he would have liked, he did manage to finally cut completely through the braid. Tossing the scissors and twenty some inches of bound hair onto the counter, Loki pulled at the stub of hair left at the nape of his neck, dislodging the remaining hair tie.

Opening the pot drawer, he snatched up a brightly polished lid and checked out his reflection. Loki’s hair no longer reached his lower back; he now had a chin length, somewhat ragged page boy cut. The wavy reflection smiled back at him lopsidedly.

That would do.

Smiling grimly, he made his way back into the living room.

“Hey Loki, your mom was just telling... Whoa. Dude. If you wanted to cut your hair before you left we could have called someone in.”

Both Thor and Mother looked at him with their mouths open in astonishment. “Oh, my darling what did you do?” Frigga exclaimed in a distressed voice, rushing over to meet him at the bottom of the ramp.

“Loki, how could you?” She whispered, lifting a hand up run her fingers tentatively through the younger god’s short, choppy hair.

Loki smirked inwardly at the fuss. “I fail to see what difference it makes Mother. I would rather be the one to do it than some bastard guard. You surely didn’t think I would be allowed in public without it being cut did you?”

Tony looked puzzled. He leaned over to the shocked Thor, “Umm. Am I missing something here big guy? Why all the fuss because your brother decided today would be a good day to play with scissors? I mean yeah it could be neater, but with his cheek bones he gives Johnny Depp a run for his money rocking a bob style cut.”

Looking at Tony like he was insane, Loki listed with dark amusement as Thor almost stuttered. “You... You... don’t understand Tony.”

“You’re right, I don’t. Granted it isn’t a very neat cut but I don’t think the sight of your brother with a new hairdo is worth all the drama.”

Opening and closing his mouth like a fish gasping for air, Thor seemed unable to come up with an answer for Stark.

“Normally only thralls wear their hair short.” Loki said calmly, looking straight at Tony. “And no, before you ask it is not a personal preference, it is a requirement of their wretched state.” His smile being very tight lipped. “Isn’t that right Thor? Perhaps Tony can guess the only people in Asgard lower than Thralls?”

“Umm. Going off the top of my head, which has a lot of short hair on it, I’m going to guess... Prisoners?”

“Indeed.”

“Nobody dared to touch your hair while you were imprisoned brother. You are a prince after all.”

“Really Thor? As I understand it, having people touch my hair was the least of my worries,” Loki shot back, his words striking with the same accuracy that he threw darts with. “You will have to forgive me, I’m afraid I don’t remember much from that time period. Fortunately so.”

OoooO

Trying to rub away a headache, Tony watched as Thor and his mother swooped down on Loki, obviously more than a little displeased that he had pre-emptively assumed a thrall-prisoner appearance. While Tony didn’t really get why it was such a big deal, from the shocked looks that Frigga’s entourage were throwing at Loki as they crossed the living room heading towards the terrace, it obviously was.

Shaking his head at the confusion that was Asgardian culture, Tony retrieved a large equipment duffle from his private elevator and walked over to the trio who were still having a hissing argument that broke off when he approached them.

“This is some stuff that I packed for you Loki,” he said, trying unsuccessfully to hand it to the Trickster god.

“Best give it to Thor, Stark. Anything I carry back to Asgard will most likely be confiscated.”

Bobbing his head in rueful agreement Thor held out his hand, easily slinging the heavy duffle onto the same shoulder as the messenger bag he already carried. “That is unfortunately true my friend. I will carry it and give it to Loki as soon as possible.

“Oh. Okay. Hey, looks like you guys are getting ready to leave.” He looked directly at the Queen. “Do you think I could have one more minute to talk to this one here?”

“Of course, but only a moment. We have delayed far too long as it is.” She placed a hand on Thor’s

arm and started steering him towards the terrace. “Loki, join us out on Anthony’s terrace when you get done.”

They both watched as mother and son went out into the deepening dusk.

“So. Do you think that Thor will give you your stuff?”

“Oh yes. I have no fear that he won’t slip it back to me after he inspects everything to make sure that there is nothing in it that I can use as weapon.”

“Damn.” Tony’s the creases at the corner of Tony’s mouth deepened as he suppressed a smile. “If I had known he was going to search it I would have snuck in some God of Thunder thongs or maybe a Captain America corset.

Loki’s brows furled and a painful, horrified expression settled upon his face as he turned to Tony.

“What?” Tony asked with a smirk.

“Stark, please tell me such items are not licensed by the Avengers.”

“Well, the underwear is, but all of the vibrators and naked body pillows and fetish gear products are completely unlicensed counterfeits.” Tony said, glancing over to return a good bye wave Thor is giving him through the terrace doors, before turning and smirking up at the absolutely appalled expression on the god’s face.

“And you know about these items how?” Just as Tony started to reply, he placed both palms up in a ‘Stop’ position.

“Never mind, it would most likely scar me for life if you answer that question. Besides, it isn’t important. What was it that you wanted to say Stark?”

And wasn’t that a totally loaded question, Tony thought. There were sooo many things that he wished he had time to do. Hell, he would have settled for their little make out session going on while in the elevator. Tony really, really wished he had skipped hiding in his lab and had visited the god earlier.

But there was no sense crying about that now, so he wagged both eyebrows and gave Loki an absolutely filthy grin.

“Keeping in mind that they can see us from the terrace,” The god reminded him hastily.

“Well first off, I like when you call me Tony rather than Stark.”

“I’m sure you do. But there is a time for me to call you Tony and a time for me to call you Stark. Now, before my oaf of a brother charges back in here to get me... Why did you ask me to stay behind for a moment.”

Tony could feel the grin sliding off of his face. He took a step behind the god and waited until Loki turned to face him. Loki’s back was blocking anyone outside from seeing him as he lifted a hand placing it on the Trickster chest. Tony pulled Loki down in to a tight hug and whispered almost soundlessly in his ear. “Don’t trust Thor’s friends, they kinda have it in for you, I’m not sure of the details but I’m pretty sure that they had a hand in whatever fuck up started this mess.”

Loki turned his head to look at Tony, brows pulled up in concern. He didn’t say anything to Tony, but his face crinkled up in disbelief.

"I'm serious buddy." Tony said patting his arm. "Be careful up there. And watch out for those four assholes. I think they were out to get you."

Loki nodded thoughtfully.

"And.. If you can sometime, maybe send a letter or recording or something with Thor," Tony asked in a small voice. "Doesn't have to be much, just something that will let me know that you're okay? Please? I really am going to miss you."

As much as Tony didn't want to admit it, they had run out of time. "I know Pepper is going to be pissed that she missed saying good bye. You've been a good friend. And I'm sad to see you go. I wish more than anything that you could stay." He glanced away, blinking a few times and blindly patted Loki's chest lightly.

He finally looked up to see Loki regarding him sadly. Tony's shoulders slumped. "Come on, they're waiting for you."

With a tiny frown, Loki searched Tony's face a moment as if committing it to memory. And just before Tony thought he was going to mist up again, he was surprised to see the god's frown changing into a tight lipped smile. As if only by pressing his lips very firmly together could Loki keep something amusing from escaping.

"What?" Tony asked side tracking suspiciously. Loki's head gave a tiny shake even as his eyes crinkled in repressed amusement. "No. Seriously. This is not the time for crap like this. What's so damn funny?" He demanded.

Chuckling openly now, Loki shook his head ruefully, mischief dancing in his eyes. "I shall miss you Stark. Never doubt that. But..." Loki laughed, his tongue poking out for a second before he grabbed his bottom lip with his teeth. "It's just... I almost wish..." He huffed, "It would have been so amusing if you had placed those items in the package you are sending. I would have loved to see what Thor and Mother would have done when they found them."

"Oh." Tony felt color flowing across his cheeks and he was feeling more than a little embarrassed at the mental picture of what the two Asgardian's likely reaction to his idea... But then it hit him how funny it would have been and his own snort of amusement escaped him. "Oh man, that would have been something to see, wouldn't it."

"Indeed." Loki choked out, eyes glistening only a little. "He would have been as red as one of your suits. And what mother would have thought of you..."

"Yeah?" Tony smacked Loki's arm as they turned towards the glass doors, "Well if anyone had said anything to me I would've told them that you asked for them."

They shared a smile. "Oh yes Stark. Throw me under the bus why don't you?"

"Ha! Like you've never done it to me you asshole."

Side by side, they walked out onto the terrace, snickering like school kids.

It took only a moment for Loki to stand beside his mother, who smiled at him and then nodded regal thanks to Tony before she looked up into the sky.

Tony just had time to return the small wave that Loki gave him before a large dark man wearing an enormous helm steamed down with boom of bright light. Before Tony's eyes could even adjust, the light surrounded the entire party and snapped back into the sky to vanish leaving only a sizzling

pattern freshly scorched on the concrete pad that they'd been standing on.

Impassively, Tony stood there a long moment watching the concrete sizzle that complicated knot pattern it always did when Asgard dropped down to fuck up Tony's life.

OoooO

After several long moments of abstraction, he shook himself, and looked out over the New York skyline.

"Jarvis, forward the problem file to one of my bigger tablets. Highlight the most problematical and list them by estimated time length of time invested thus far. Call Fury, tell him I am going to be out of pocket for an unknown amount of time. Call the airport and tell them to fire up a jet and have it ready to leave by the time I get there. I DO NOT want to waste anytime sitting on the tarmac waiting to take off."

"Your last request might cause a few problems Sir. Perhaps it would be easier to take one of the suits where ever it is you are wanting to go?"

"Yeah, I could. But you know I never did get that drink delivery system implemented on any of the suits, so I want a plane. A fast plane with lots of ice and a nice selection of Scotch."

"Understood sir. May I tell them where this plane is going?"

"Home. We're going home. All of us. Tell Happy I want your brothers in California by Thursday."

OoooO

There had been a few others here and there that Loki had considered friends. Not many but still a special few who had approached Loki due to shared interests and not because he was a Prince of Asgard.

Unfortunately circumstances always seemed to separate him from them in the end, just like it was separating him from Stark. So while their last conversation had only been about a delightful, if childish prank, Stark had at least laughed. And in the end that last moment of light heartedness had been the only parting gift that Loki could give the mortal.

And now there was only time for one last smile and a small wave before he left Midgard to complete a sentence that would last longer than the little mortal's lifespan.

Tony Stark had been a good friend at the end, Loki thought sadly, not perfect by any means, but who really was? The Norns knew he certainly wasn't, Thor definitely wasn't. That oaf had barely been a brother even before this whole mess had started. Sif? As children they had gotten along, but when she decided that currying favor with the other warrior trainees was more to her advantage than whatever support he could give her. Certainly despite his many flaws and his persistent pressure to become intimate, compared to them, Stark was a much better friend.

As the brilliant light faded the familiar sky of Asgard greeted him. Closing his eyes, Loki lifted his face to the sun letting its warmth wash over him, taking a deep appreciative breath. While trouble might plague his mind here, his body knew this to be home. Eyes still closed his brows began to knit in confusion. How was he able to feel the warmth of the sun? Deeply unsettled Loki opened his eyes taking in Asgard in the distance.

But not enough distance.

The transported party was starting to disperse, surging around them and Father who was standing a few feet away. Several yards behind the All Father stood a group of strangely dressed guards and a few grooms holding the horses that Frigga's entourage headed towards.

Feeling tension building in his chest, knowing something was deeply wrong Loki turned and his eyes narrowed. Heimdall's observatory was a good ways behind them but no matter how hard he tried to clear his vision, it kept swimming in and out of focus. Why had they materialized half way along the BiFrost and not at the observatory's gate. Why was Heimdall in front of them, holding a glowing blue cylinder, with his sword on his back and not at the top of his control platform? Troubled he drifted towards the distant observatory hoping to see it more clearly.

He must have made a noise of some sort that alerted Thor to his movement.

"Loki?"

"Loki!" Thor yelped. Before he could even turn to see what was wrong, strong arms wrapped around him lifting him into the air.

"Put me down you great oaf!" Loki spat, trying to twist out of the Thunderer's grip.

"Brother what are you doing!" Thor cried, carrying him back to where they had been standing.

"Trying to see what is wrong with the observatory! What in Helheim do you think I was doing?" Loki hissed, color rising while he pushed ineffectually against Thor's arms. "Thor! People are watching us, put me down right now!" he demanded from between clenched teeth, smoothing his expression, trying to keep what little dignity what with everyone seeing him being lifted and manhandled by his rock-headed brother.

Thor spun them away from the observatory, setting him down beside a strangely terrified Frigga, but maintaining a tight hold on Loki's arm.

"What in the Nine is wrong with you," Loki whispered angrily out of the side of his mouth as he straightened his clothing, acutely aware that the All Father was studying him closely. No doubt disapproving of his hair and Midgardian garb.

"Odin you must fix this immediately, it is not safe," Frigga demanded, her hand clenched tightly around her husband's fingers. The note of urgency in her voice touched caused tendrils of uneasiness to roil within him. Almost resignedly Odin detached himself from Frigga's grip. The same hand that Frigga had been holding a moment before was placed on Loki's shoulder. His father's weary yet irritated expression being directed at him so soon after he arrived was cause for concern.

"Loki you have been returned to Asgard for a purpose." Odin intoned, using a voice more suited to his formal court, than that of a man welcoming home his wayward son. "You are charged with repairing the BiFrost."

While Loki had quite a few questions about what could be wrong with the BiFrost that caused it to be so difficult to see, the odd phrasing caught his attention. He was charged with repairing the BiFrost? Not assisting with the repair of the BiFrost? If something was wrong with the great bridge, why was there not an entire team working even now to restore it for Asgard's glory? And what was wrong with it in the first place? What he could see of it looked fine, but it was almost as if there was an avoidance spell placed upon it the way his gaze kept slipping away from it after the merest glimpse.

All these questions and dozens more roared within his mind, but the first one that escaped him was, “You want me to fix the BiFrost? Surely not by myself? Is there some minor protection that has come undone? I don’t understand.” Loki hated the tiny quaver of uncertainty that made its way into his voice.

Odin tilted his head back, his jaw was tense as he looked at Loki with a small smile that never reached his eye, “Turn my son and I will make you understand,” he said.

He glanced sideways at Thor, who released him, but whose eyes were studying the shifting colors of the bridge as if he had never seen them before. Swallowing a slight feeling of uneasiness, Loki allowed himself to be turned. Odin standing behind and slightly to one side rested one hand on Loki’s shoulder holding him in place. Odin’s other hand directed his attention towards the distant observatory.

Not exactly sure what he was supposed to be noticing, Loki narrowed his eyes, trying to peer through the haze preventing him from getting a clear view of the familiar structure.

“Loki...,” Odin’s voice was that odd mix of stern and soothing that he used so often when they were younglings. A voice he had used on multiple occasions when Loki or Thor had only narrowly escaped injury while doing something that they perhaps shouldn’t have, the parental vocalization of the relief that his sons were alive and uninjured and a promise of dire punishment to come.

“...there was a threat, the BiFrost was used in a manner it wasn’t intended for and an over loading occurred.”

“What?” Loki stuttered, turning his head to look frowningly over his shoulder at his father. He would have turned completely if he hadn’t been held so firmly, Odin obviously not wanting him to move just yet. The All Father shook his head gesturing again with a wave of his hand, indicating that Loki needed to look down the BiFrost and not at Odin.

“Thor had to destroy it to keep it from wreaking havoc in the realms.” Dark power flowed from his father’s hand down his shoulder curling down his back like a splash of ink in a goblet of water. “What caused the BiFrost to be so misused is not necessary for you to know. You only need to concern yourself with the information necessary to repair it.” Odin’s grip tightened and the odd curling sensation on Loki’s back began to burn.

“Do you understand?” Odin asked. Loki gasped, uneasiness in his stomach warring with the scorched tracery feeling running across his back. His vision of the observatory twisted a moment before disappearing like a soap bubble. Loki just managed to stop himself from yelping in pain and surprise, but he did shy backwards, bumping into his father and Thor as the bridge he was standing on disappeared only a few yards ahead of him. The gorgeous multicolored surface replaced with a crazed jagged edge dropping off into the deep waters below, the observatory completely gone.

A jagged edge that he almost stepped over just moments earlier. It was only years of training that kept Loki from falling to his knees and dizzily retching up everything in his stomach. What had happened to the BiFrost? What would it take to damage a structure that drew its power from the great Yggdrasill itself? Was this why no one had ever come to see him while he was at Stark’s? Confused Loki shook head, trying to clear his tumbled thoughts. No, that couldn’t have been why he had received no visitor, but still what had happened? When had it happened? Why wasn’t the damage being repaired?

Loki heard Odin’s voice as if it was echoing from a great distance away, “Thor, take Loki to his chambers, explain his restrictions and introduce him to his guards. Tomorrow is soon enough to discuss the repairs that need to be started.”

The BiFrost had been destroyed. Mesmerized by the destruction of something that had been present the whole of his life, Loki was only dimly aware of Thor again gripping his upper arm as he stood there, almost afraid to take his eyes off of the sudden drop off to the turbulent waters far below. He remembered that part of the structure's strength was imparted to it by its link to the World Tree. A link that once forged should have been impossible to sever. Yggdrasill itself would have poured her not inconsiderable power into the bridge to keep it from being damaged, so how had it happened?

Irritably, Loki tried to shake loose from Thor's grip to drop down on to his knees to examine the damage. While his brother didn't let go, Thor did finally sink down with him, after several almost absent-minded attempts by Loki to kneel. Loki spread his free hand out over the crystals, running a finger delicately over the almost imperceptible joints between them. Slightly impeded by the grip that Thor still kept firmly on his left arm, he shuffled forwards a few feet and reached out to touch the cracks marring the crystals closer to the edge.

Where are the work crews? The mages, the stone masons, the artificers? Why aren't they working on this? Surely they don't expect me to do this by myself?

He noticed several small sections along the edge of the break that had an almost melted look and a black coating that defiled the brilliant shine of the delicately tinted crystal. Stretching, Loki tried to tap on them but he couldn't quite reach them from where he knelt. It took a bit of tugging, but after several tries to get closer, Thor shifted his grip from Loki's upper arm to his wrist. Using the Thunder God as an anchor, he cautiously inched closer until he could tap the blackened area with his fingernail. It had a crumbly, brittle quality about it, like the bubbled outer area of a volcanic glass shard. This was not part of the original damage he thought. Was caused by some sort of crystalline decay, or was it caused by some unsuccessful repair attempt--

"...ki. Loki there will be time for you to study this later. Come Loki. We have to leave now."

His attention broken and Loki blinked. Looked over the edge and flinched back almost landing on Thor, wondering, as his heart pounded wildly, wondering how he had gotten so close to the edge.

And why am I so worried about it? Heights had never bothered him before. He had flown with his brother long before Thor had figured out the many things that could go wrong when he carried a passenger, heights had never bothered him.

Pulling him further away from the edge, Thor stood, making sure to stand between Loki and the ledge. An involuntary shiver ran through him, earning him a troubled look from the blonde.

"Come Loki, it has been a long day." Thor heaved a sigh, "And we mustn't forget that your strength is not as it should be."

Ignoring the poisonous glade Loki shot his way at that totally unnecessary reminder of his reduced state, Thor steered him over towards a several warriors dressed in gear more reminiscent of the Vanir than the Æsir.

"Aldfrig, is the head of the guards that will be protecting you." Loki's eyes widened inquiringly at Thor. His mother had mentioned that he would have trusted guards, but she hadn't said anything about them not being Æsir.

Thor leaned over and whispered, "All of your guards are sworn directly to mother and were drawn from her Vanir estates from those having been in service since the founding of the royal family." He flicked a look towards the guards and lowered his voice even more, placing his mouth almost at Loki's ear so they would not be overheard. "I would be most courteous to them brother, many are friends of hers from childhood and those that are not, are the sons of her childhood friends." The

brothers shared a knowing glance with each other, well aware of how protective their mother was of her countrymen just in general. The ones from her home estates were most likely distantly related, given the Vanir habit of minor sons and bastards being sworn to the service of their clan chief. Aldfrig, being brunette obviously had more than a touch of non-royal Vanir in his ancestry, but his facial cast complete with high arched brows still marked him as being a proud descendent of Fjörgynn, the founder of the Vanir royal family.

Pulling away from Thor, Loki straightened and inclined his head politely. “Lord Aldfrig, I am pleased to meet you.”

“Prince Loki,” Aldfrig bow was echoed by the men standing behind him. “It is our pleasure to be of service.”

“Aldfrig, please escort my brother to his chambers. I will follow you there after I have a word with good Heimdall.”

OoooO

The horses had not even begun to be led away when Loki was surrounded by his new guards. As they traversed the grand hall on their way to the family wing, Aldfrid walked beside him softly detailing the names of the guards in his service. He gave Loki a briefing on the guards accompanying them now and the names of the ones that he would meet later.

“Loki!”

Stopping to look to the left, Loki saw Fandral smiling and waving as he exited a side passage.

“I heard you were coming back today.” The goateed blonde exclaimed cheerily.

Hogan and Sif walked a few steps behind Fandral, Hogan’s face as always, was stern and unreadable and Sif’s as always, was screwed up in a scowl. Hogun always looked like that and unless Thor was close by Sif always scowled at him. She’d been doing it for hundreds of years since he’d cut her hair as a child. The small amount of time he’s spent on Midgard would certainly not have been long enough to change that.

Setting his jaw, Loki turned and observed the trio coming towards him. His bodyguards of course were subjecting them to much closer scrutiny, two of them positioning themselves in front of him. Not blocking anyone per say, just standing so that anyone approaching would naturally stop before reaching them, and of course long before reaching Loki.

“Ah...” Fandral faltered and came to a stop a few feet from the body guards, before gamely grinning at him and continuing. “Ah Loki. Welcome back. It’s good to see you again.”

Behind him Sif snorted and rolled her eyes.

“Is it really Fandral?” Loki questioned, in a dry flat voice. “I can’t imagine why it would be. Not for either of us....” He glanced at Fandral’s companions. “And I can see it certainly isn’t for your friends.”

“No, honestly it is,” the blonde persisted, trying to maintain his carefree smile in the face of three bodyguards who also looked like they also differed with the blonde on the topic of him being a friend of their charge. Loki watched as the smile flickered and then finally died when confronted by the obvious distrust in Loki’s eyes.

Still Loki did have to give the man credit for tying as Fandral pasted on another smaller, somewhat

sheepish smile on his face. “Yes. Well, I am sure you need to get settled. At any rate it is good to see you back home Loki, perhaps, perhaps we will see you later.”

Smirking mentally just a bit at the absurd mental image of Fandral, Sif and Hogun seeking him out to reminisce about old times Loki inclined his head raising his brows skeptically. “Perhaps,” He agreed with absolutely no enthusiasm at all. Loki was wary of their good will at the best of times, but more so now after Stark’s warning. Without any further acknowledgement of the three he started forward, his guards maintaining their spacing.

OoooO

“My Lord Loki, once we have made sure that your chambers are secure, two of us will stand guard at the door while one of us always remains inside.” Aldfrig told him. As requested, Loki stood in the large entry hall just inside the door. The guards Hoen and Sterkt, working as a team, checked the main chamber, adjacent bedroom, bath and the large equipment closet he had repurposed as a work shop. He could feel that the windows were secured, as was the secret passage between his room and the south hallway; the wards were so strong Loki wouldn’t be surprised if he was able to see them.

After several long moments the pair returned. “All is secure, son of Frigga.” Hoen said with a slight dip of his head which Loki returned politely.

Aldfrig stepped aside, waving the pair through the door before securing it from the inside. When he was finished, the Vanir officer turned back to face him. Lifting his right hand, Aldfrig pulled back his hair slightly; Loki could see a courtier’s communicator wrapped over the top of his ear.

“All your guards have been provided with one of these and will wear them even when off duty as rings so they can be summoned in case of need.”

Loki’s eyes widened. Courtier’s Rings as a rule were reserved for those in service to the king or queen of Asgard. But the one Aldfrig was showing him was quite different from the ones tuned to Odin or Frigga’s inner circle. This meant if every guard of his had one, rather than just passing them off to the next person on duty as was common for all but the highest ranked staff, then he collectively had more of them tuned to his individual service than his mother, the queen of Asgard did.

This is was troubling on so many levels that Loki couldn’t even begin to calculate them.

Leaving Aldfrig standing guard at the door, Loki left the entry hall and drifted towards the bookshelves lining the walls of his main chamber.

As far as Loki could figure, it had been almost a decade since he last remembered being in these rooms. It hadn’t really hit Loki how long it had been until he noticed the slight disorder of his books. Many things had changed since he had last been here, himself most of all he supposed. Even with just a glance, he could see that his room had been thoroughly ransacked. No doubt everything deemed the least bit dangerous would have been removed.

Fortunately all the guards at the door would be able to see was his back rather than the crumpled expression he’d felt come over him when he noticed the many gaps in his library and numerous empty shelves that had once held his various possessions. His sense of violation that someone had doubtless touched every item in his room was almost overwhelming. He had spent centuries here, but right now he felt as if the apartment in Stark’s tower was more his home. He struggled to keep the tears from welling up in his eyes as he noticed one treasure after another missing from their accustomed place.

Blinking Loki stood in his main chamber and fought to hold himself together at least until he saw Thor. Once he had spoken to Thor... Once Thor left... Once he was gone... Once Loki was as alone as he was ever going to be here, then he promised himself a nice long shower. An extended session in the one place he could hide from Heimdall and his guards as once he had hid from Jarvis and Stark. And when he had reinforced his mask, making sure that no one in Asgard could actually see 'him', and then he would turn his attention to survival.

Because in the end, surviving to spite them all was the only option he had left.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.

They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Progress of a sort

Chapter Summary

Coping... for a certain value of the word....

Many, many thanks to reader 'A passing Iclander' Who was kind enough to provide correct translations for all my Space Viking. You Rock!

Chapter Notes

Also I am surprised that no one recognized or at least mentioned the design in the Q of the Queens Grace title.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Chapter 53 – Progress of a sort

“Sir, Ms. Potts has been trying to reach you for the last two weeks. I am afraid she is getting most insistent.”

“What part of I’m busy don’t you two understand.” Tony asked, not looking up from the circuit board he was fiddling with.

“I am sorry Sir, but she says that she’s a bit worried.” Jarvis apologized.

“Look, just tell her I’m fine, there is nothing to worry about and I’ll call her tomorrow.” The engineer said, with an exasperated eye roll.

“Yes Sir, but you have promised to call her for the last three days.”

“Mute Jarvis.”

OoooO

The frozen image was an early video of Loki sitting on his bed. All that could be seen was a drawn white face with dark hollow eyes peering out from under a blanket that was tightly wrapped around the thin figure. Tony was slumped in his chair beside his work bench holding a nearly empty bottle of scotch just staring at the screen.

“I am not sure that looking over this old security footage is very helpful Sir.”

Tony blinked several times without it doing him a bit of good. His ability to focus enough to actually see the details on the screen had disappeared over an hour ago. “Wast’d. S’much time. I was just.... b’ing a b’stard Jay.” Tony slurred mournfully, his own eyes looking every bit as bad as the haunted ones on the screen.

“Well to be fair Sir, both times that you and Mister Odinson met the circumstances were not exactly conducive to the formation of a friendship.”

Tony’s breath hitched. “‘Could’a tried,” He insisted stubbornly, then his face crumpled. “S’not fair. E’ryone leaves.” He swiped a hand across his cheek before he leaned over to bury his face in his folded arms. “‘cept you.”

“Indeed not Sir,” The AI said softly. “I will never leave you.”

OoooO

“Get away from me Red, I’m trying to drink my coffee in peace.” Tony growled hunched down in a black wool coat that he hasn’t even bothered to unbutton. A black suede ball cap and a dark grey scarf cover enough of his face and chin that he really doesn’t need to wear the dark tinted black Wayfarer sunglasses to totally obscure his identity, but he does anyhow.

Tony’s driver had dropped him off at one of his favorite coffee shops on the way back from a site inspection. So of course, the one time he’s been out of his tower since he came back to town in walks Natasha. He should have known that the only good day he’d had all week would get fucked up somehow.

Good for a certain value of the word of course.

His surprise visit to a supplier had gone swimmingly. He found the underlying cause of the latest Tough Books high test failure rate. And as he had told Pepper, it was a latent hybrid circuit failure caused by piss poor material sourcing at the company that made one of their sub-components.

That got Pepper off his back because he had found the problem and proved as he had been maintaining all along, that the problem wasn’t his design. Then having that nice hour long session of cathartic screaming at the company’s owner, purchasing manager and material testing supervisor? Well that had felt so god damn good that he’d decided not to go home immediately and actually stopped to get a coffee, relax and enjoy himself like a normal person.

So much for that.

Ignoring him, because she was an asshole that way, Nat just pulled out a chair and sat down across from him. “Tony we’ve been trying to contact you for weeks.”

“Hey, here’s an odd thought,” Tony said as he exaggerated a disinterested expression for her benefit, since subtle never got him anywhere with SHIELD. *Not that he was dealing with them anymore.* “Did you ever think that maybe I’m not taking your calls because I don’t want to talk to you?” He set his coffee on the table and pulled his sunglasses down enough to peer over them. “Seriously Red, did I not already pay you back for funneling your little data dump through Jarvis so he could strip out my personal information and the stuff that SHIELD had stolen from me?”

“You know you did. But this is something else.”

“I don’t want to be involved with something else. Not any something. Setting up an account for the Avengers to draw on was about as much reward as you’re going to get. Now like I told Steve, piss off and leave me alone.”

Allowing a hint of exasperation to show in place of her normal expressionless façade, “Tony without SHIELD we need a source of intel. Coulson’s group could supply that for us.”

“For a price I’m sure,” Was Tony’s snide retort. “Be careful it isn’t your immortal soul Nat.

Assuming SHIELD allowed you to retain yours.”

“I lost that long before SHIELD Tony. But I will pass on the warning to Steve if that makes you feel any better.”

Tony’s coffee was gone before either of them spoke again. “Steve knows you’ve been more than generous given the circumstances of what almost happened. But Tony, we really do need a bit more help.” She eyed the billionaire warily. “Steve would never mention it to you, but it isn’t only a source of intel we need. We’re fine now, we’ve managed to stock up on quite a few things, but eventually we will also need help with Gear and Weapon replacement.”

Tony put his elbows on the table and lowered his forehead into his palms with a small groan. But Natasha was better at waiting than he was.

It never ends does it? After several long minutes he raised his head up, laced his fingers together and then rested his chin on them while he studied the ex-agent in front of him. It was a minute or two more before he finally spoke.

“If I ever find out that my information has been stolen by the Avengers, Agent’s little band of Boy Scouts or any other group that either of you might be associated with, I will cut everyone off without a penny. Tell Steve that I want him and Coulson to personally guarantee that that will never happen again. Also I want to see Steve and Coulson tomorrow afternoon. I have one more thing I want, but I need to talk to them about it in person.”

“I can’t promise you Coulson, but I will certainly let him know, I’m sure he will be there if it’s physically possible. You want to give me a hint so that they can be prepared?”

Tony fished in his pocket for a wad of bills and threw them on the table. The amount was generous enough to compensate his waitress for how long at her table had been occupied. “Nope. But you might warn them that if I don’t get it, the whole thing is off. So they need to come prepared to deal.”

OoooO

“Here ya go Tony,” Steve said, dropping down a folder on the coffee table in front of the billionaire before walking on to the opposite side of the couch from Tony and sitting down. “I finally got that paper signed you wanted... And Pepper wanted me to talk to you about that appearance request we--”

“Holy Moly!” He exclaimed, getting a clear look at the disheveled billionaire during a brighter scene on the large screen television. Tony was famous for hiding in his tower even when he was in a good mood, but from what Pepper had said the last time that Steve had seen her, he’d been more reclusive than normal during the last several months. “Jeeze Tony, how long have you been watching this...”

“Dirty Jobs Marathon, Captain Roger,” Jarvis supplied helpfully.

“Thanks Jarvis. Jarvis could you open the drapes please?”

The additional light only served to highlight how bad the billionaire’s overall appearance was. “Oh Tony, you need to start taking better care of yourself.”

Tony’s only answer to that was an eye roll and another slug of that vile canned coffee. He had switched from regular coffee a few days ago because Dummy could deliver the cans without spilling it all over the place. Minion would have been better as a server, but Tony doesn’t really

care to see him and had Jarvis keeping him busy in areas that the engineer didn't normally frequent.

"Tony," Steve's voice took on more commanding note, "When was the last time you bathed? Or changed your clothes for that matter."

Not receiving an answer, he noted the hollow look on the smaller man's face. "Tony have you been eating at all?" he asked softly.

"Not unless multiple cans of Starbucks Double Shot Espressos count as food Captain." Jarvis chimed in, earning his nearest camera a sour look from Tony.

Steve shook his head.

Tony Stark doesn't mope. Tony Stark deflects. He goes to bars, picks up girls, goes out to dinner with them, gets drunk, screws his brains out, spends the next day nursing a hangover, spends the day or two after that loathing himself and then has the rest of the week to catch up with everything he let slide the previous three or four days.

And then Whata ya know it's Friday night again and the whole process repeats. It might not be much of a life but it's his.

He looked steadily at the horrified Steve for several long moments. "You know what Rogers, you're right. I need to get out some more. Get some air, stuff like that."

Steve's face lit up in obvious relief.

"Tell you what. I'll go get changed and we'll go hit a nightclub. A few drinks, a couple of laughs."

He smirked inwardly at Steve's disappointed reaction.

"Sound like fun, but what about the Make a Wish Gala this Sunday? We have a ton of kids requesting to see you Tony."

Tony groaned inwardly, knowing that Rogers was not going to let go of this one. Crap like this was why he seldom spoke to the man. Tony didn't mind helping people, hell the Maria Stark Foundation donated generously to the Make a Wish program, but he wasn't big on public appearances when there was alcohol and beautiful women present. Those occasions were hard enough to deal with, but throw in some sick kids and his guilt and depression gauges buried their needles.

He glanced over; Steve was giving him his patented '*I just know you'll do the right thing*' look.

He sighed to himself making a mental note to have Jarvis bar Captain Righteousness from entry in the future. "Fine. Alright. I'll do the party. But I'm not even a real Avenger anymore. I shouldn't even have to go to these things."

"Tony, none of us '*have*' to go, it's an honor to be asked to help the kids."

And it was, but that still didn't make it any easier on him. "Whatever. You owe me."

"I do." Steve agreed watching Tony carefully, obviously happy that he agreed to go with them, but still worried. "You look like you've been working pretty hard Tony; a change might do you good."

"Yeah, so I've heard." The inventor agreed derisively, getting up from the couch and stretching

before he wandered away without another word.

OoooO

“Hey Rhodey, how’s it going?”

“Good, I’m good. Just calling to let you know I’ll be back out in California next week to work on some stuff for Stark International. I thought I would see if we can schedule a few nights out or something.”

“Dude, if you want to bring Denise that’s up to you.”

“Well obviously no strip clubs, although may I say that Denise might--”

“You want to bet? I bet you a hundred bucks I can.”

“Is she there? Yeah? Put her on the phone.”

“Dulcinea! You know I love you right.”

“Of course I do.”

“Well okay, almost as much as Pepper.”

“Are you happy now? You know you have totally blown my game here. And broken my heart I might add.”

“Well I am going to tell you how you can make it up me. Listen, I’m going to be back in town next week and I want us to get together for a couple of nights.”

“Sure. I love the Sayers Club I am totally up for that. But listen; don’t say a word until you’ve heard me out okay? Not a word.”

“Great. How about we go to the... Hang on a minute, Jarvis is looking something up for me. Ah. How about we go to the Excalibur in Las Vegas and take in the Thunder Down Under Show? Seriously Jarvis? Dee No! Don’t say its name. Rhodey will hear you.”

“What is it? It’s a male strip review. Jarvis tells me it’s very good, very classy and we can embarrass the shit out of Rhodey.”

“Why? Because he bet me I couldn’t get you to go to see some strippers while I was in town. He didn’t specify they had to be female.”

“And this is why you are my one true love. Text me what nights you guys are available and I’ll get us a suite at the--”

“Sure, the Bellagio is fine with me. But don’t tell Rhodey where we’re going.”

“No, I am not going to have him pulled up on stage. I think taking him there is pushing it, and this is me talking.”

“Because I don’t want to be shot with a suit that I manufactured, that’s why.”

“Great, looking forward to it.”

“No, honestly I’m fine.”

“England.”

“Yeah I miss the annoying skinny shit too.”

“It took a while to get used to the quiet, but I’m good now.”

“Move back to the states? It’s not likely, but who knows.”

“Uh huh. Thanks for asking. Honestly I’m fine. Don’t forget to send me your dates okay?”

OoooO

He’d been caught off guard. After over a year of not hearing anything from the Asgardians, Jane had called Tony out of the blue and told him that Thor was headed his way to visit him.

Not knowing when exactly Point Break would arrive, Jarvis had ordered a nice picnic lunch and gotten everything set up on the patio. Tony then planted himself out on the terrace to wait for Thor, determined to get a bit of sun while he labored through the never ending pile of project progress reports that Pepper sent him. He had just finished pulling a few projects from the problem queue to troubleshoot later when Jarvis spoke.

“Sir, I do believe that Mister Odinson Senior is approaching.”

Tony closed his laptop and sat it on the small table beside the lounge. Standing up Tony he ran a quick hand through his hair and bounced a few time to get his black jeans and red Stark Tech hoodie to fall back into place before he waved to catch the flying god’s attention.

Of course Thor, being Thor, he couldn’t just land. Tony smiled to himself as the blonde looped the building a twice before dropping dramatically onto the reinforced BiFrost pad at the end of the terrace.

“Nice landing there Pikachu, I particularly like the flourish with the cape when you stand back up.”

“Friend Tony, it has been too long,” Thor enthused, clasping his forearm hard in some kind of Asgardian version of a hand-shake.

“Likewise buddy, but watch the grip, I need that arm.” He waved the Asgardian over towards the table where two coolers were sitting. “Come on sit down, what can I get you to drink?”

Not surprisingly Thor was willing to settle for a beer, so Tony pulled the smaller cooler so that it sat between them and opened it up. “Take your pick, there’s plenty to choose from. You hungry?” Like there was a chance in hell that Thor wouldn’t be hungry. If he’d heard Foster bitch about the god of Pop-Tarts eating her out of house and home once, he’d heard it a dozen times.

Thor was indeed hungry - big surprise there - so Tony opened the larger cooler and started dealing out containers. They were full of deviled eggs, potato salad, Buffalo Chicken dip, salsa, chips, cut vegetables, buttermilk dressing, cherry tomatoes and his personal childhood picnic favorite, bacon croissant sandwiches. He had so much food laid out that if anyone else other than Thor had been sitting across from him, he would be worried about having ordered too much. Leaving Thor to open the containers, Tony dug out the two packages with the plates, napkins and cutlery, passing one over to Thor. “There ya go buddy, dig in.”

“It is indeed a fine feast Tony,” Thor said with a smile, ladling more potato salad on his plate than any one person should be able to eat.

Heimdall and Jane had apparently brought him up to speed on SHIELD's little melt down, again reminding Tony how fucking scary Asgard's surveillance was. Tony told him how upset Steve was that his long lost friend Bucky has managed to disappear not long after killing Fury.

"Tried to kill him you mean," Thor said absently to Tony while apparently giving leery consideration to a half-eaten chip full of Buffalo Chicken dip.

"No, he's dead. Shot several times at point blank range." Tony replied frowning at the big armored blonde.

"I like this," Thor informed him, shoving the rest of the chip in his mouth and reaching for the container. He put several large spoonfuls on his plate before he looked up at Tony. Noting his friend's troubled look he smiled. "I assure you my friend. Fury survived and will doubtless soon return to make you miserable again. Last time Heimdall mentioned him, he was meeting some people in the Roma Palace in a country that is now called Croatia."

"Roma Palace?"

"I think Mister Odinson might be referring to the Diocletian Palace Sir. An incredibly intact Roman Palace in the city of Split." Jarvis interjected.

"There is no way that Natasha didn't know that. Do you think she's told Steve?" He wondered aloud.

"The Captain knows, he spoke with him before he left." Thor's voice was muffled as he spoke around a large bite of his sandwich.

Tony's lips thinned, granted Thor could be wrong, but that was not very likely. If this had caught Heimdall's attention, doubtless the patron god of nosiness had his facts correct to the last dot. What was pissing Tony off now was that he was apparently good enough to supply funds to the Avengers but not trusted enough to know about Fury.

Just fucking typical.

Rather than work himself into a crappy mood, Tony decided that he was done talking about them. He'd only been discussing them to mask what really wanted to know.

Taking great pains to keep his tone casual, Tony asked, "So, enough about Fury, what's Loki been up to since he's been home?"

Like he always does whenever his brother is mentioned, Thor smiles. Except this time, his smile doesn't reach his eyes. "My brother is working on the repair of the BiFrost mostly."

Nodding, Tony toys with his sandwich for a moment, breaking off a section before stating. "Cool. All the wizards getting together to get it done by next Yule, huh?"

Smile fading, Thor looked decidedly uncomfortable. "No. Loki is the only mage currently working on it. The other mage's wouldn't work with him," He ducked his head and said, in as much of a whisper as Thor was capable of, "I think Loki didn't want them to interfere or try to tell him what to do, it's said that he deliberately slighted them until they revolted against the All Father's assignment." The big blonde paused thoughtfully, "Although to be honest, the other mages had been working on it since it was originally damaged without making any noticeable progress." He hurriedly added, "And to be fair, they did an excellent job of cleaning the site and getting much of the more common supplies purchased, prepared and stored."

Tony huffed. “So they had no idea what to do to actually fix it and instead spent their time doing busy work. Right?”

Chuckling Thor told him, “Well, that is pretty much what Loki said when the All Father questioned him. But perhaps it is better this way. While all of the planning and logistics fall on Loki, at least it will be safer for him to work alone.” Noting the Tony’s incredulous expression he explained, “While his guards are excellent, there is not much that they can do against an enraged mage.”

Tightening his lips, Thor shook his head. “Loki is not exactly conciliatory at the best of times. When he is stressed he is much worse. I doubt if it was safe to be around other powerful mages who he insulted with word, deed or competence.

“Really? And is he?” Tony asked curiously. “A competent rebuilder of rainbow bridges?”

“He is,” Thor’s smile finally reached his eyes, the Thunder God was obviously very proud of his clever brother. “The dwarf artificers’ grumble, but they have begrudgingly reported to my father that his attempts to regrow the crystals seem to be working.”

“Crystals?” Tony asked trying hard to sound unconcerned, he popped a cherry tomato in his mouth and relaxed as he remembered that Thor was not one for catching nuances.

“Yes, while they haven’t grown at a measurable rate yet, he has managed to get them glowing. He thinks that if he can find a power source and a way to attach it to the bridge he can get them to grow faster.”

“Great. You want another beer, big guy?” Tony asked, rummaging in the icy slush of the drinks cooler. Since of course, Thor was always up for another beer he dug one out for him too, setting it on the table before opening his own and taking a drink. “So... Loki is happy to be home then?” he asked, setting his bottle lightly down on the table, pretending to examine it while he actually watched Thor covertly.

Thor’s ever present smile dimmed a bit. “I’m not sure. I don’t see him much, almost never in fact.” He opened his Somersault Ale took a long drink and then continued quietly. “When I do see him, he is very calm, very unobtrusive. He seldom speaks of anything not related to the BiFrost.”

Tony’s heart sank.

“So what does he do when he isn’t working on the rainbow highway?”

“Very little my friend. He has lunch in my mother’s garden once a turn, which is mainly when I talk to him.”

Frowning, Tony thought a moment, casting his mind back to the conversations he’d had with Loki over the years. “A turn? About forty days yes?” Thor nodded, taking another long pull of his beer. “So you only see him every forty days or so?”

“Oh no. I occasionally ‘see’ him in the halls on his way to the work site or the library or occasionally when I ride out to speak with Heimdall. But I seldom speak with him during those times as he is preoccupied with his work and he can get quite testy if you distract him or interrupt his thoughts.” He shrugged. “When he isn’t working or studying old BiFrost accounts... he practices battle dance.” Thor looked a bit embarrassed. “He is very good. He says it keeps him in condition, which I suppose it does with the effort he puts into it.”

Thor is so transparent. It’s was plain to see, that he both disapproved of an adult doing something

that the Asgardians considered to be a child's activity but at the same time he was reluctant to think ill of his brother for doing it.

"So no battle dance for you, big guy?" Tony asked, quirking an enquiring brow at the big blonde.

Thor looked down, not meeting Tony's eyes. "No, generally only women and young children battle dance, boys give it up when they start real weapon training." Tony could swear he was blushing under that blonde beard of his.

"I go to the training grounds with my friends, the Warriors Three and Sif several times a week. I have invited Loki to accompany us of course, but he refuses. He says as a prisoner his time is not his own and he needs the daylight hours to work on the bridge anyway. Since he only has evenings available to exercise, he sees no need to go to the training grounds and go through the routines alone. So instead he battle dances. He has removed almost everything from the main room of his quarters except a chair for his inside guard to sit in. Fortunately, his guards are Vanir and Battle Dance is not frowned upon there as an activity for grown men.

"So, Thor. Did your parents tell him what went down yet?" Tony asked curiously, breaking off sections of a taco chip to nibble on just for something to do with his hands.

"No. Except of course the main facts about the BiFrost being broken." He sighed, "That was done within minutes of him returning." He gave Tony a rueful look. "Loki was so curious as to why we landed in the middle of the bridge that he tried to take a closer look at the observatory and got far too close to the edge for our comfort." At Tony's alarmed look, he hastened to reassure him. "The geas did not allow him to see that the bridge was broken. I grabbed his arm and father amended the geas so that he can see and hear anything he needs to fix it. I understand that there is always someone waiting in a sky boat anytime Loki or any of the workers are present."

"Really? So how is that working out? What's to stop someone from spilling the beans about the other stuff? I mean maids know everything and surely there is a clerk or school chum of his that has heard at least rumors."

"Friend Tony, when my father designs a geas that is usually the end of it." He shook his head ruefully. "While my brother is quite clever, Father is not only skilled in sedir but also very determined. Those with the skill to amend the geas would not do so as my father would be aware of it almost immediately. Also Loki's encounters with people who might hint things to him in a roundabout manner are severely limited."

Thor rambled on for a while longer in between bites of this or that. Basically Tony got the idea that Loki was allowed to go wherever he wanted, as long as his guards went as well. However, he had chosen not to leave his rooms except when he wanted to go to the work site, library, his mother's hall or her garden. Loki normally had the guards bring him food when they returned from the servant's hall after their own meals. He apparently refused to go to the main dining hall unless he was specifically bidden to do so and not always then.

Tony wasn't sure how long he had been lost in thought for until he noticed Thor wiping his mouth with a paper napkin and pushing his plate back. "Well my friend--"

"Thor," Tony interrupted, "I know you are in a hurry to get back to Viking Land, but do you think I could persuade you to hang around for an hour or so? I'd like to gather up a few things and type up a quick letter for your brother."

Lounging on the couch with a movie playing in front of him, Tony started. He hadn't been watching the movie; in fact he would be hard pressed to even recall its name. Some new piece of shit that had looked more interesting in the trailer than it actually was. In fact, as he tried to recall what he had been concentrating on he was surprised to realize that it had been nothing, which was rare for him. But despite the whole 'nothingness' of his thoughts, he was so out of it that it took him a few seconds to understand what Jarvis was saying.

Visitor? Who the fuck would be visiting him unannounced?

"Tony..."

A voice Tony hadn't heard in well over a year had him almost leaping off the couch in shock.

"Loki!" He threw off the red fleece throw he had been covered with and spun around to kneel on the couch looking towards a desolate figure opening the terrace door.

"Holy shit!" Tony cried, jumping over the back of the couch, "Buddy are you alright? What are you doing here?"

Leaning against the now closed door, lower lip caught in his teeth was the most forlorn Trickster that Tony had ever seen. And that was saying something since Tony had seen the god hit rock bottom several times during the years that he had lived in New York.

"Where's Pepper Tony? I can see it's late. Is she still in her office? I tried to time my visit so she that would be, but it's not easy with the time differentials being so fluid." Loki said his voice cracking slightly as he tried to speak casually.

"Ah. No." Tony said regretfully, sad to see the god's already slumping posture droop even more. "She's mostly based in California these days. Easier for business, ya know, or at least closer to her fiancé."

"Ah." Loki smiled weakly at him before turning his disturbingly bright eyes towards the window. "I'm sorry to have missed her." He said neutrally, his voice out of sync with his posture and expression.

Tony just stood there a minute, looking at him. Loki seemed tired. He was a lot thinner than Tony would have liked and while he hadn't been reduced to a totally waif-like stature, he was almost as thin as he had been when he was having nightmares and was all depressed.

The god was dressed simply in loose dark charcoal leather pants with minimal, for space Viking fashion, black decoration and insets, a simple close fitting black long sleeve tunic tucked in to his pants with a wide black and dark green leather belt wrapped around his slim waist. The belt was looped through some kind of rubbed bronze loop and then looped through itself rather than being traditionally buckled. The round toe black boots that Loki was wearing were low, only slightly above the ankle and just screamed casual, in so far as any Asgardian garb could be. In fact the whole get up seemed to be the Asgardian equivalent of a Saturday afternoon kicking around the house outfit.

Tony wondered if whoever did Loki's laundry would even know what to do with something like sweats and a hoodie.

"So... new look for you? Or have Asgardian fashions changed?" He asked, more to make the god speak, than any real interest in what your average Asgardian was wearing this season.

"Ah, no." a slight blush rose up, delicately tinting the sharp cheekbones. "I just find that I have no

patience for all the layers and stiffness anymore.”

Looking up at the unconcerned, slightly smug mask that Loki had pulled over his tired features, Tony racked his brain for something that would get rid of that damn ‘*you can’t see me*’ mask that the god was wearing again.

“Hey!” Tony put an upbeat note in his voice, “I bet we could Skype Pepper in an hour or so when her meeting is done.”

Loki’s brows drew together in mild puzzlement, until he realized what Tony was suggesting. Loki smiled, his face brightening like the sun breaking through after a week of hard rain.

Pulling the god towards the couch, Tony felt his own smile match Loki’s. “Come on, sit down, I’ll have Jarvis order us some dinner. What are you up for? Chinese or Pizza? Or shall we flip for it?”

Loki reached out and pulled Tony to a stop, folding him into a hard hug and laying his head on top of the engineer’s. “Both Stark, I want both.”

OoooO

While they waited for dinner to arrive, Tony pulled up various files and they discussed progress and problems with the BiFrost Einstein-Rosen bridge project. Tony’s progress had been hampered by time constraints. He did have other projects for both Stark International and the Avengers that needed to be worked on after all, but he had incorporated and been thinking about every bit of data that Loki had been secretly sending him in the monthly letter exchange Frigga had instituted not long after Thor had carried back Tony’s first letter.

Tony’s main problem on his side was trying to get the right raw materials to grow the crystals. He had an R&D team that was working with the samples that Loki had smuggled to shortly after they started writing each other. They were making progress, getting close even, but they had not quite managed to duplicate them.

Loki was also having a problem with the crystals, his concerning power generation and the power transfer needed to encourage the crystals to grow faster. There was no record of how the crystal growth was powered the first time, although there were a few mentions of what an incredibly long process it had been. Something that Loki did not even want to think about.

Jarvis had checked with Pepper and timed their food order so that they had dinner a bit later. At seven thirty, while Pepper stayed in her conference room; her aides brought her the dinner Jarvis had ordered. Then using the equipment there, Jarvis set up a secure video conference over the Stark net system. So between the Earthgardian takeout and the video visit, Tony was glad to see the god cheer up considerably.

Over the course of the next three hours they ate and drank and talked with Pepper and Jarvis. Tony and Pepper brought Loki up to date on various items that had been too trivial to put in their monthly communiques with the god and he in turn answered some of their questions on various things he had written that puzzled him and more importantly how he felt about what was going on in Asgard, at least as it affected the trickster.

They resolved to start exchanging micro data cards tucked into their paper letters. They were pleased to hear that one of Loki’s minor powers had been returned to him. It’s wasn’t much but he used his power to create minor illusions to make sure his workers knew what he wanted them to do. It was also enough that Loki was able to share with them the memory of Odin when he finally realized that Loki had basically set up a Midgardian Office in his private library. He also showed

them the new cabinet that Odin had ordered installed there so his 'Off World Tech' would be concealed from the servants and secured when Loki was out of his rooms. Tony almost pissed himself as the illusion showed Big Daddy One Eye trying to use technical Midgard terms as he argued with Loki and Frigga about how unnecessary it was to use anything other than Asgardian computing devices and tools to do research with.

Loki finally showed them a memory snippet of Frigga mesmerized by the first Harry Potter movie that Loki played for her on his laptop during one of their monthly private lunches.

"Mother quite likes Midgardian movies and novels," Loki told them while fishing for the last shrimp in an order of seafood *lo mein*. "I sometimes have to send one of my guards to retrieve my StarkReader from her. They sometimes succeed." He grinned at them. "She sneaks it onto the high table during boring council meetings, much to the All Father's disapproval."

And if Loki didn't mention not going anywhere but his rooms, the BiFrost site and his mother's quarter's, they didn't bring it up either. They all knew that but for Frigga and her imported entourage of guards, he might not have even been safe in those few areas.

Loki saw Thor more often than he wanted to, mostly in his mother's garden after he and Frigga had finished eating lunch, but occasionally when he escorted Loki to a mandatory feast, complete with Frigga's guards which apparently totally hacked off his Odin-ness. Tony got the impression that Loki was trotted out more to reinforce the '*wisdom*' of Odin's '*merciful punishment*' than any desire of Loki's to interact with the court. And yes he was still Battle Dancing, much to Thor's displeasure. And no, Loki had not spoken a word to the Fuckers Four, as Tony privately referred to them, since the first day he had returned to Asgard, not even when they sat at the high table with the royal family during feasts.

Eventually Pepper had to leave to get ready for a reception of some sort, after which Tony, deeming Loki cheered up enough to broach the subject, asked him about the reason behind his surprise visit.

"Mother decided I needed a more of a break than our monthly letters." He smiled wryly. "Apparently she was concerned that I was becoming more despondent than usual."

Okay, he really didn't want to hear that. Tony made a mental note to try to find some way to communicate with Asgard more often, or better still if not in real time, at least in message bursts. He wondered if he could find something to power a pipe rather than a bridge so they could at least send messages. Even if he could work that out, the signals would require a lot of precise timing... Perhaps Jarvis needed a baby sister on Asgard? As a communication assist and maybe a little something to interact with the forlorn god when he sequestered himself in his rooms until they figured out a rainbow T-1 line?

Shaking his head, Tony refocused on his trickster.

"So how did you make the trip? I wouldn't think they'd let you off Asgard unattended?" Tony asked puzzled.

"When no one else would associate with him due to his mortal taint, Mother decided to teach and mentor Heimdall's son Konr. Heimdall may answer to and obey the All Father but he has often done discrete favors for mother when she can word them in such a way that they have not already been forbidden." Loki laughed bitterly, "Since previously I had my own means of traveling between realms, I was one of the few who dared to twit Heimdall. I am of course forbidden to touch the Tesseract, but that does not mean that Heimdall can't deliver me to Midgard himself. Although no one, including the All Father would think he would without a direct order."

Loki then deftly turned the conversation back to the BiFrost problem. Over the remainder of his visit, Loki was like water over a rocky stream bed; his conversation flowed, but always around certain trigger topics. The one time that Tony had flat out insisted on asking him if he was having any problems with Asgard in general, Loki had refused to answer, excusing himself to make a bathroom run... A suspiciously long bathroom run. After that, Tony allowed Loki to deflect any topics he wanted to avoid for the rest of his visit.

“The service desk has your items ready sir; they are putting them in the elevator now.” Jarvis said, interrupting them.

During their talk, in addition to pulling up files, Tony had sent Jarvis texts with things for him to get ready. A new black hoodie, a bottle of peach schnapps, any new test results that hadn't already been sent on the Einstein-Rosen bridge including SHIELD's, a couple of bags of dove chocolate, a dozen packs of sour cherry gummie sharks, with the liquid centers of course, A new tablet and numerous sd cards several of them crammed with every new book that Jarvis thought that Loki might like. This included a copy of *'Change of Command'* that had been finished off by a ghost writer using Terry Pratchett's incomplete manuscript and plot notes. Okay, so that one wasn't officially released yet, but Tony had gotten tired of waiting and hacked the publisher's system. He thought it was cool and he just knew that Loki loved Moist Von LipWig. And to make sure everything kept running; Tony included the latest StarkSolarCharger kit with extra storage batteries.

Loki laughed when the elevator opened and everything was packed in a large Iron Man backpack. The god ran a long delicate finger over the sewed on arc reactor patch, prominently featured on the red carryall.

“Thank you Tony, I have always wanted my own Arc Reactor,” Loki said, smiling down at the engineer.

Tony wasn't embarrassed, it was a cool design. And hey, they most likely had a bunch of them sitting around somewhere to give to kids during events or something. So it was something the service desk could get in a hurry. Besides....

“Oh shut up you,” he said, smacking the smirking god's arm. “Just be glad that I didn't put any Iron Man pajamas or T-shirts in there, 'cause I can totally see you rocking them in Asgard.”

In fact Tony thought that Loki would look crazy hot in the Iron Man Arc Reactor and Stark International Logo boy shorts that that Pepper had recently licensed. It was a shame that they didn't have a male equivalent, although Loki was slender enough to fit one of the larger female sizes. But no, no arc reactor panties for Loki... Bad Tony. Although...

“I wonder...” Tony said while Loki cocked his head inquiringly. “I wonder if I can have the R&D team work out some kind of leads to transfer power from an Arc Reactor to a crystal array?”

Loki tilted his head, frowning thoughtfully.

“Recharging it would be a problem,” Loki pointed to the StarkCharger in his back pack. His brows lowered and he looked at Tony with narrowed eyes. “Possibly mother or Thor could recharge it from the Tesseract?”

Tony stuck out his lip, thinking a moment. “Yeah, that might work. Would take a bit to figure out a charging method of course... But hell, Selvig already had designed a powered suitcase for it.”

“I suppose there could be an area on the crystal array connections to inscribe runes?” Loki looked

at Tony, whose brows were now raised in inquiry.

“Fuck, I don’t see why not. Jarvis make a note for me to go talk to the R&D guys tomorrow.”

“Very good Sir. I hate to interrupt,” Jarvis said apologetically, “but it is very close to the time that Mister Odinson indicated that he had to return.”

“Ah.” Loki’s face fell. Carefully setting down the back pack, he turned suspiciously bright eyes away from Tony, looking out the window for a long minute while he rebuilt his ‘Loki Mask’.

“Give me your hand Tony,” Loki said, holding out his own.

Tony reached out and watched as Loki slid a gently glowing disk into his palm before grasping Tony’s wrist. Like always, there was a faint flash of light and an electrical tingle from the rune that Frigga had inscribed all those years ago. Loki lifted his hand and they both looked down. Loki’s disk was now just a dull rune-laden sliver of stone and Tony’s rune was no longer faded, but instead as dark and sharp as it had been the day Tony first received it.

Mask slipping a bit, a miserable looking Loki dropped his eyes to the floor. “I hate Asgard,” he whispered. “I wish I could have stayed on Earth.”

Tony pulled him into a hug, “I know buddy, we wish you could too.” He rubbed the tall gods back comfortingly. “We’ll miss you a lot, you know that don’t you?”

Tony pulled back searching his face, but Loki just nodded, not looking at him. “Stay here Tony.” He said, picking up his back pack he shrugged it over one shoulder and headed out to the terrace. “Good bye Jarvis,” he said, just before closing the door.

Tony watched as the god walked to the far end of the terrace, where all those years ago Tony had installed a thick concrete pad. Standing on the intricate spiral knot pattern that was burned into the concrete, Loki took a deep breath before raising his face to the night sky and calling out, in a voice Tony couldn’t hear through the glass for Heimdall. Loki turned and smiled at Tony, just as a bright light containing a tall helmeted figure flashed onto the terrace and then disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

~Fini~

If you have availed yourself of the convenience of downloading this story to read off line, I wish you would visit it again and leave a comment or review. Even if it's just 'hey I liked ?whatever?' If you aren't a comment kind of person then a bookmark and Kudo would be wonderful. They all help this story's placement on the search engine.

Chapter End Notes

And.... That’s a wrap!

This was all going to be one story... But honestly the middle got away from me and I was flat loosing track of stuff in my doc file. So I decided since this is really two discrete stories to use the Midgard and Asgard action as a break point. I do hope to see you in the next section which is where all the ON PAGE smut between THESE TWO

will occur.

Comments and reviews are greatly appreciated, if you aren't a comment kind of person then bookmarks and Kudo's would be wonderful.

They all help the story placement on the search engine. Many thanks to my faithful commenters and of course to all that have kudo'd and bookmarked in the past.

Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Sequels have Posted

Chapter Summary

Queens Grace Completed 8-18-2014 Please see the sequel to this story - Anthony of Asgard.

Anthony of Asgard has also completed. Please see sequel Stark Intergalactic

Chapter Notes

**** Newsflash!!! - Anthony of Asgard & Stark InterGalactic have posted!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Art for Queens Grace - Chapter 26 - Natasha Down -

Not that Tony minded Natasha being so... Not naked, not really since she still had all her clothes on, just none of them were covering her bra and panties. So let's go with underdressed rather than naked, he thought, smiling at the assassin lying there in her underwear with only one sock on. The other sock was lying on the floor by her shoes which had clearly been ripped off so that Loki could get Natasha's trousers off of her.

Ignoring the woozy glower he was getting from her, Tony gave Natasha a half smile. He looked over and lifted an inquiring brow at the shirtless godling. He noticed that Loki, several feet away from them was stealthily shifting his weight back and forth, still not out of combat mode.

"Lokemiester, why is Natasha almost naked?"

*** Wonderful, wonderful commission piece by [LadyMintLeaf](#) ***



The Sequel to Queens Grace - Anthony of Asgard - has Posted

The Sequel to Anthony of Asgard - Stark InterGalactic - has posted

Chapter End Notes

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Beta'd by the most wonderful **Mima Mia** Many, many thanks for your assistance.

Final Sequel, Stark InterGalactic Is Posting

Chapter Summary

Just a heads up, the final sequel, Stark InterGalactic is currently posting.

[Stark InterGalactic Link](#)

This section will join the Queens Grace & Anthony of Asgard stories to the Littlest Trickster arc.

End Notes

I don't own rights to the Avengers, Thor, Iron Man or MegaMind, I wish I did, but I don't. This is for entertainment purposes only, no money is being made from this.

[Complete list of RenneMichaels writings, gifts, and art.](#)

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[The Trouble with Tricksters](#) COMPLETE - Loki is kept in Stark Tower, but he is a NOT silent, dignified, lone figure, mostly avoiding the Avengers he is forced to share living quarters with. Instead he is an in your face brat. Who walks a fine line between annoying the shit out of all of them but doing it in a way that isn't blatant enough for anyone to stomp on him without an avenging Thor coming after them. 33,251 Words

.
[Palaces of Sand and Gold](#) COMPLETE If Tony and Loki ever broke up, Tony and the SI lawyers wouldn't stand a chance against Odin and his Logmars in a custody struggle. Fortunately it hasn't come to that, but it is a struggle dealing with overzealous grandparents? Domestic One Shots in the Queens Grace Verse that can be read alone. 9563 words.

.
[The Littlest Trickster](#) COMPLETE - Tony Stark finds out that neither he nor Loki are any match for a child determined to return to Earth. A series of One Shots as the newest heir of Asgard experiences Life on Midgard. Queens Grace Verse AU, Comes after Palaces of Sand and Gold, but can be read alone. 27,800 words

.
[Queens Grace](#) COMPLETE WITH SEQUEL - After the New York attack, Odin has taken Loki's magic, made him mortal and imprisoned him. But Asgard is not a safe place for the Trickster under these conditions. Recent events make Odin decide to take away one more thing from his second son, his memory going back for the last four years, making Asgard unsafe for Loki's reduced station. From stories Thor had told, Frigga decides that Tony Stark's tower would make an excellent secure location for amnesiac Loki to be under house arrest. 225,458 words.

.
[Anthony of Asgard](#) - COMPLETE - After several years of being housed in Stark Tower as a state prisoner of Asgard, Loki is recalled to Realm Eternal. Devastated Tony is now minus a lab partner, wingman and a snark buddy for movie night. Pepper has moved to the

west coast and married, SHIELD is doing some crazy shit and with the exception of occasionally seeing Bruce, Tony doesn't have much interaction with his former team mates. He wonders how it is possible to feel so lonely in a city so full of people. However he's an engineer and a genius... he can fix this. All he has to do is convince Queen Frigga and Odin All Father to go along with his plan. - Sequel to Queens Grace.

.
[How Desperate Are You?](#) COMPLETE WITH SEQUEL – Loki has had a bad year and after leaving Midgard with Thor and challenging Odin isn't making it any better, but no matter how smart you are... Sometimes stubborn happens. It may not seem to be in your best interest, but how desperate are you for a resolution? Any resolution. Loki is returned to Asgard and nothing good happens, but Loki isn't the only one with issues, Odin has plenty of his own, especially in the realm of A+ Parenting. Loki is desperate to escape from Asgard, Odin and his past.

.
[Desperate for Change](#) COMPLETE - Returning to Midgard after an absence of almost two years, Loki finds that as desperate for change as he has been, some changes will take time to get used to, especially when they concern his relationship with Tony and Pepper. Sequel to How Desperate Are You?

.
[Lets Bark a Deal](#) COMPLETE - A spell goes wrong leaving the Avengers and Loki with a very different outlook to say the least. Tony's need to make a deal with Loki is hampered by the body he finds himself in. One Shot

.
[Lessons from Asgard – Courtesy of Loki 2 - The Dark World](#) COMPLETE - A primer for anyone who has ever wondered what the heck is going on in the Eternal City. More humor than spoiler. Asgard Secrets Exposed

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!